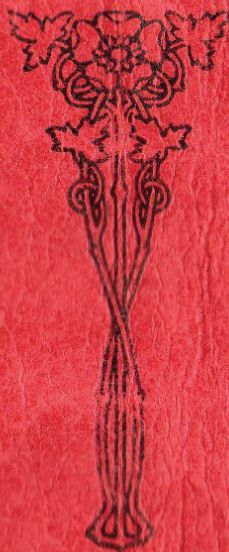


# Syndicalism

By Earl C. Ford  
& Wm. Z. Foster



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## INTRODUCTION

### THE SITUATION—ITS CAUSE AND CURE.

The American workingman who arouses himself from the customary state of indifference characterizing workingmen and gazes about him in a critical mood, must be struck by the great inequalities in the conditions of the beings surrounding him.

On the one hand, he sees vast masses of workers working long hours, often at most dangerous and unhealthy occupations, and getting in return hardly the scantiest of the necessities of life. He sees this starving, slaving mass of workers afflicted with the terrible social scourges of unemployment, crime, prostitution, lunacy, consumption, and all the other forms of social, mental and physical degeneracy which are the inseparable companions of poverty.

On the other hand, he sees a comparatively small number of idle rich revelling in all the luxuries that modern society can produce. Though they do nothing useful for society, society pours its vast treasures into their laps, and they squander this wealth in every way that their depraved and sated appetites can suggest. The monkey dinners, dog suppers, pig luncheons, hiring of noblemen for servants, buying of princes for husbands and cartloads of valuable art treasures for notoriety, and the thousand and one other insane methods of the American aristocracy to flaunt its wealth are too well known to need recapitulation here. Our observing worker must indeed conclude that something is radically wrong in a society that produces such extremes of poverty and wealth, and toil and idleness.

### SOME FAKE CAUSES AND QUACK REMEDIES.

His inquiries as to the cause of these inequalities are met by a shower of answers from retainers of the rich. He is told that they are due to the trusts, the tariff, to the fact that the workers don't "save," that they "drink," that they are unfit to survive in the great social struggle for the survival of the fittest from which the rich have emerged the victors, etc., etc. But even the slightest examination of these answers will show their superficiality and inability to explain the great inequalities in modern society.

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Poverty with its terrible co-evils and wealth with its luxuries are not caused by the trusts or the tariff. They are to be found in all industrial countries alike, whether they have trusts and tariffs or not.

Neither are they caused by the workers "squandering" their wages in "drink" and the rich "saving up." A few years ago it was shown that the yearly wages of the anthracite coal miners amounted to \$40.00 less than the cost of the actual necessities of life. It has been recently calculated that the street railway workers of Chicago receive wages enough to buy only two-thirds of the necessities of life. The same is true, more or less, of every category of workers. Even if the workers spent not a cent for drink they couldn't "save," as they would still want for prime necessities. And even if a worker expended nothing of the two dollars per day average wages he received, and "saved" it all for 2,000 years, his savings at the end of that time would amount to but a fraction of the fabulous sums amassed by American multi-millionaires, in a few years while revelling in luxury. To say that the workers are poor because they "drink" and don't "save" is absurd.

The argument that the rich are rich because they are capable and the poor are poor because they are incapable is belied everywhere. Thousands of wealthy stockholders are drawing dividends from industries they have never even seen—let alone to know anything of them or their operation. A goodly share of this interest-drawing aristocracy—if not the majority—is composed of perverts and mental degenerates of various types, such as the Thaw and McCormick heirs of malodorous renown. To say that these degenerates and the mediocre balance of the aristocracy occupy their present positions of affluence because of their superior capacities is to insult common intelligence.

#### THE TRUE CAUSE AND ITS CURE.

The fallacies of the various other orthodox explanations for the social inequalities and their terrible effects will at once be apparent to the intelligent inquiring worker. He must seek deeper for the true explanation. He will find it in the wages system, which is the foundation institution of modern society.

**The Wages System.**—The means whereby society gains its livelihood: the shops, mills, mines, railroads, etc., are owned by the comparatively few individuals. The rest of society, in order to work in the industries and procure a living, must secure the permission of these individuals. As the number of applicants for jobs is far greater than the needs of the industries, there is such competition for the available positions that those who secure them are, in return for the privilege to earn a living, forced to give up to the owners of the industries the lion's share (in the United

States four-fifths) of the abundant products the highly developed machinery enables them to produce. The owners of the industries take advantage of their strategic position and steal the greater portion of the workers' product, giving them, in the shape of wages, barely enough to live on.

The wages system of robbery is responsible for the great extremes of poverty and wealth to be found in modern society. It has existed ever since the very beginning of industrialism and its effects grow worse daily. Every invention of a labor-saving device, by increasing the army of the unemployed and making the competition for jobs keener, enables the owners of the industries to more thoroughly exploit their slaves. Thus the wages system has the effect of making inventions of labor-saving devices curses to the bulk of society, instead of blessings as they should be.

**The Revolution.**—The wages system is the most brazen and gigantic robbery ever perpetrated since the world began. So disastrous are its consequences on the vast armies of slaves within its toils that it is threatening the very existence of society. If society is even to be perpetuated—to say nothing of being organized upon an equitable basis—the wages system must be abolished. The thieves at present in control of the industries must be stripped of their booty, and society so reorganized that every individual shall have free access to the social means of production. This social reorganization will be a revolution. Only after such a revolution will the great inequalities of modern society disappear.

#### THE MEANS TO THE REVOLUTION.

**The Class Struggle.**—For years progressive workers have realized the necessity for this revolution. They have also realized that it must be brought about by the workers themselves.

The wages system has divided the immense bulk of society into two classes—the capitalist class and the working class. The interests of these two classes are radically opposed to each other. It is the interest of the capitalist class to rob the workers of as much of their product as possible and the interest of the workers to prevent this robbery as far as they can. A guerrilla warfare—known as the class struggle and evidenced by the many strikes, working class political eruptions and the many acts of oppression committed by capitalists upon their workers—constantly goes on between these opposing classes. The capitalists, who are heartlessness and cupidity personified, being the dominant class of society and the shapers of its institutions, have organized the whole fabric of society with a view to keeping the working class in slavery. It is, therefore, evident that if the workers are to become free it must be through their own efforts and directly against those of the capitalists. Hence the revolutionary slogan, **TAU**



"The emancipation of the workers must be wrought by the workers themselves."

#### Rejection of Political Action and Acceptance of Direct Action.—

It goes without saying, that for the workers to overthrow capitalism they must be thoroughly organized to exert their combined might. Ever since the inception of the revolutionary idea the necessity for this organization has been realized by progressive workingmen and they have expended untold efforts to bring it about.

These efforts have been almost entirely directed into the building of working class political parties to capture the State—it being believed that with such a party in control of the State, the latter could be used to expropriate the capitalists. The Socialist parties in the various countries have been laboriously built with this idea in view. But of late years, among revolutionists, there has been a pronounced revolution against this program. Working class political action is rapidly coming to be recognized as even worse than useless. It is being superseded by the direct action\* of the labor unions.

This rejection of political action and acceptance of direct action has been caused by the failure of the former and the success of the latter. Working class political parties, in spite of the great efforts spent upon them, have been distinct failures, while, on the other hand, labor unions, though often despised and considered as interlopers by revolutionists, have been pronounced successes. For a long time, practically unnoticed, they went on all over the world winning the most substantial victories for the working class. It was only the continued failure of political action that led revolutionists to study them and to make a dispassionate comparison of their achievements, possibilities, structure, etc., with those of the working class political party. The result of this study is the growing rejection of political action and the rapid development of the revolutionary labor unions, or Syndicalist movement, which is attracting the attention of the whole world.

In the following pages the various phases of this new movement, designed to free the working class, will be discussed.

\*This much-maligned term means simply the direct warfare—peaceful or violent, as the case may be—of the workers upon their employers, to the exclusion of all third parties, such as politicians, etc.

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## SYNDICALISM

### I

#### THE GOAL OF SYNDICALISM.\*

The Syndicalist movement is a labor union movement, which, in addition to fighting the every-day battles of the working class, intends to overthrow capitalism and reorganize society in such a manner that exploitation of man by man through the wages system shall cease. The latter phase of this triple task—the establishment of a society worthy of the human race—is the real goal of Syndicalism and the end for which all its efforts are finally spent. Consequently, an understanding of the manner in which the new society shall be organized is a matter of first importance to Syndicalists and they have given it much thought.

#### THE OPERATION OF THE INDUSTRIES.

**Anti-Statism.**—At this early date, though many of the minor details of the organization plan of the new society can only be guessed at, many of its larger outlines are fairly clear. One of these is that there will be no State. The Syndicalist sees in the State only an instrument of oppression and a bungling administrator of industry, and proposes to exclude it from the future society. He sees no need for any general supervising governmental body, and intends that the workers in each industry shall manage the affairs of their particular industry; the miners shall manage the mines; the railroaders manage the railroads, and so on through all the lines of human activity.

**Current Syndicalist Theory.**—Just how the workers shall be organized to manage their industries has been a matter of much speculation. The current Syndicalist theory is that the labor unions in the various industries will each take over the management of their particular industry; that "the fighting groups of today will be the producing and distributing groups of tomorrow."†

This theory, while based on the correct principles, that the State is incompetent to administer industry, and that the most competent bodies possible to do so are the workers actually engaged in the industries, is in all probability incorrect in itself.

\*"Syndicalism" is the French term for labor unionism. It is derived from the word "syndicat," or local labor union. To distinguish themselves from conservative unionists, French rebel unionists call themselves revolutionary Syndicalists. The former are known as conservative Syndicalists. In foreign usage the French meaning of the term Syndicalism has been modified. It is applied solely to the revolutionary labor union movement.

†C. G. T. convention, Amiens, 1906.



There are other organizations of workers, overlooked by the formulators of the above theory, that are far more competent to carry on industry than are the labor unions. These are the shop organizations of modern industry.

**Shop Organizations.**—By the shop organization of an industry is meant the producing organization of workers in that industry. It includes every worker in that industry, whatever his function may be. All industries, including the professions, etc., have such shop organizations more or less well developed. To carry on production of any kind without a shop organization is impossible.

The superiority of these shop organizations to the labor unions for the administration of industry is manifest. They have been especially constructed to carry on production in all its phases, and are daily doing so; while labor unions are simply fighting organizations of workers, knowing, as such, nothing about the operation of industry. These shop organizations will not perish with the fall of capitalism, but, barring some initial confusion, due to the revolution, will continue on in much their present shape into the future society. To try to replace these highly developed and especially constructed producing organizations by the labor unions—which have been built for an entirely different purpose—would be as foolish as unnecessary. There will be no need to change the “fighting groups of today into the producing and distributing groups of tomorrow.” These producing and distributing organizations already exist. The labor unions will serve a very different purpose in the future society, as will be shown later.

**Autonomy of Shop Organizations.**—In the future society the shop organizations will be perfectly autonomous—each automatically regulating its own affairs and requiring no interference from without. The producing force of society will be composed of autonomous units—each industry constituting a unit. The beginnings of this industrial autonomy are seen in the more highly monopolized industries of today. These industries are becoming automatic in their operation. Chance and arbitrary industrial dictatorship are being eliminated from them. The whole industrial process is becoming a matter of obeying facts and figures. In a monopolized industry the national demand for its product flows inevitably to it and it regulates its production automatically to conform to this demand. In the future society all industries will be monopolized and each will regulate its production according to the demands placed upon it by the rest of society. The relations between the various industries will be simply the filling of each other's orders for commodities.\*

This principle of autonomy will extend to the component parts of the various industries, as arbitrariness in an industry is as detrimental as between industries. This principle is also being more and more recognized and accepted in modern industry. The recent breaking up of the Harriman railroad system into five autonomous sub-systems is proof of this.

As the activities of the autonomous shop organizations will extend over all social production, including education, medicine, criminology, etc., there will be no need for a general supervising body to administer industry—be it the State or the labor unions. And as there will be no slave class in society and no ownership

\*For the fundamental idea of this paragraph—the automatic operation of industry—the authors are indebted to J. A. Jones of New York.

in the social means of livelihood, the State will have lost the only other reasons for its existence—the keeping of the working class in subjection and the regulation of the quarrels between the owners of the industries.

**Initiative.**—The statist, while admitting, perhaps, that a certain amount of autonomy is necessary between the industries and also between their component parts, and that, to a certain extent, they will automatically regulate themselves, will, nevertheless, insist that very many instances occur in which these autonomous bodies are incapable of carrying on the multiple functions of society, and that they must submit to legislative bodies. He will pose the question of initiative: “Who, in the new society, will decide on the adoption of far-reaching measures, such as the creation of new industries, reorganizing of old ones, adoption of new industrial processes, etc., which will affect all society?” And he himself will quickly answer: “The majority of the representatives of all society in the government.”

But this conclusion is entirely fallacious and at variance with the laws of modern production, as the following typical example, taken from modern industry, will show: Suppose steel costs \$10.00 per ton to produce and a new process is invented, by which steel can be produced for \$8.00 per ton. The question of the adoption of this new process—surely one affecting all society—is merely a question of whether or not it will pay interest on the cost of its installation. IT IS PURELY A MATTER OF FIGURES AND IS SETTLED IN THE STEEL INDUSTRY ALONE. SOCIETY AS A WHOLE IS NOT CONSULTED. THE STEEL INDUSTRY DICTATES TO THE REST OF SOCIETY IN MATTERS PERTAINING TO THE STEEL INDUSTRY. And this is perfectly logical, even from an idealist standpoint, as it is manifest that the workers in the steel industry are the most competent of all society to decide on matters relating to the steel industry.

There is nothing democratic in this procedure; but it is that of modern industry. And it has been so successful in the development of the industries under capitalism that it is very unlikely it will be changed in the future society. And why should it be? Suppose, for instance, the scientifically organized medical fraternity, from experience and figures at hand, decided that a certain hygienic measure, such, for example, as vaccination, to be necessary for society's welfare, would it be logical for a rational society to submit such a proposition to a referendum vote of a lot of shoemakers, steel workers, farmers, etc., who know nothing about it, or to a government of their representatives equally ignorant? Such a procedure would be ridiculous. Even under capitalism the incompetence of governments to decide such questions is being recognized, and the decisions of specialists of various kinds are being more and more taken as the basis of laws regulating their particular social functions. In the future society these decisions, coming from thoroughly organized specialists—doctors, educators, etc.—who then will have no interest to bilk their fellow beings, as they now have—will be the social laws themselves governing these matters, even as the decision of the steel industry is now social law in matters pertaining to the production of steel. This undemocratic principle will be applied to all the industries.

The fear that one industry might impose arbitrary measures upon the rest of society is groundless, as the same impulses for the



improvement of the industries, though in a different form, will exist then, as now. In the unlikely event of such arbitrariness on the part of one industry, the use of direct action tactics on the part of the other industries would soon make it reasonable again.

**Selection of Foremen, Superintendents, Etc.**—In the future Syndicalist society the ordinarily unscientific custom of majority rule will be just about eliminated. It will be superseded by the rule of facts and figures. Not only will the industries be operated in the undemocratic manner above outlined; but, the responsible positions in them will be filled in a manner all at variance with democratic principles. The foremen, superintendents, etc., will be chosen on the score of their fitness; by examination, instead of on the score of their ability to secure the support of an ignorant majority, through their oratorical powers, good looks, influence, or what not, as is the ordinary democratic procedure. Syndicalism and democracy based on suffrage do not mix.

#### DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL PRODUCT.

The question of the system for the division of the social product in the new society has not been the subject of much discussion by Syndicalists. However, they very generally accept the Anarchist formula: "From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs." They will abolish all ownership in the social means of livelihood and make them free for each to take what he needs.

They believe that when all are free to help themselves from the all-sufficing products of society they will no more misuse their opportunity than people now misuse the many enterprises under capitalism—streets, roads, bridges, libraries, parks, etc.—which are managed according to the Anarchistic principle of each taking what he needs. The prevailing code of ethics will prevent would-be idlers from taking advantage of this system.

Syndicalists generally repudiate the Socialist formula: "To each the full social value of his labor" and its accompanying wages system of labor checks. They assert, with justice, that it is impossible to determine the full value that individual workers give to society, and that if this is tried it will mean the perpetuation of social aristocracies.\*

\*For fuller and very interesting details on a probable system of division of the social product, as well as that of the division of labor, in the future society, the student is recommended to read Kropotkin's "The Conquest of Bread," procurable from Mother Earth Publishing Company, 55 West Twenty-eighth street, New York City. Price, \$1.00.

## II

### THE GENERAL STRIKE.

**Some Syndicalist Ethics.**—The Syndicalist is characterized by the harmony that exists between his theories and his tactics. He realizes that the capitalist class is his mortal enemy, that it must be overthrown, the wages system abolished and the new society he has outlined established, if he is to live; and he is proceeding to the accomplishment of these tasks with unparalleled directness. He allows nothing to swerve him from his course and lead him in an indirection.

The Syndicalist knows that capitalism is organized robbery and he consistently considers and treats capitalists as thieves plying their trade. He knows they have no more "right" to the wealth they have amassed than a burglar has to his loot, and the idea of expropriating them without remuneration seems as natural to him as for the footpad's victim to take back his stolen property without paying the footpad for it. From long experience he has learned that the so-called legal and inalienable "rights" of man are but pretenses with which to deceive workingmen; that in reality "rights" are only enjoyed by those capable of enforcing them. He knows that in modern society, as in all ages, might is right, and that the capitalists hold the industries they have stolen and daily perpetrate the robbery of the wages system simply because they have the economic power to do so. He has fathomed the current systems of ethics and morals, and knows them to be just so many auxiliaries to the capitalist class. Consequently, he has cast them aside and has placed his relations with the capitalists upon a basis of naked power.

In his choice of weapons to fight his capitalist enemies, the Syndicalist is no more careful to select those that are "fair," "just" or "civilized" than is a householder attacked in the night by a burglar. He knows he is engaged in a life and death struggle with an absolutely lawless and unscrupulous enemy, and considers his tactics only from the standpoint of their effectiveness. With him the end justifies the means. Whether his tactics be "legal" and "moral," or not, does not concern him, so long as they are effective. He knows that the laws, as well as the current code of morals, are made by his mortal enemies, and considers himself about as much bound by them as a householder would himself by regulations regarding burglary adopted by an association of housebreakers. Consequently, he ignores them insofar as he is able and it suits his purposes. He proposes to develop, regardless of capitalist conceptions of "legality," "fairness," "right," etc., a greater power than his capitalist enemies have; and then to wrest from them by force the industries they have stolen from him by force and duplicity, and to put an end forever to the wages system. He proposes to bring about the revolution by the general strike.

**The General Strike Theory.**—By the term "general strike," used in a revolutionary sense, is meant the period of more or less general cessation of labor by the workers, during which period, the workers, by disorganizing the mechanism of capitalist society, will expose its weakness and their own strength; whereupon, perceiving



themselves possessed of the power to do so, they will seize control of the social means of production and proceed to operate them in their own interest, instead of in the interest of a handful of parasites, as heretofore. The general strike is the first stage of the revolution proper.

There is nothing strained or abnormal in the general strike theory, neither in the supposition that the workers can so disorganize capitalist society as to be able to seize the industries, nor in the supposition that they will do so once they realize they have the power. Both conclusions flow naturally from the everyday experiences of the workers.

The power of the workers to disorganize and paralyze the delicately adjusted capitalist society and the inability of the capitalists to cope with this power are shown by every large strike conducted by modern methods. This has been even more clearly demonstrated than usual by the recent great strikes in England. The two-day strike of the railroaders paralyzed England, and the frantic capitalist class hastily brought it to a close. The recent strike of the coal miners was even more effective—the capitalists frankly acknowledging that England faced the most desperate situation in its whole career. If the English capitalist class was in such desperate straits during these strikes of single categories of conservative workers, what condition would it be in before a general strike of a revolutionary working class? It would be helpless and would have to accept any conditions the workers saw fit to impose upon it.

The everyday tactics of the workers strongly indicate the truth of the conclusion that they will expropriate the capitalists as soon as they learn they have the power to do so. In their daily strikes they pit their strength against that of their employers and wring from them whatever concessions they can. They don't remain long content with these concessions, and as soon as they are able they proceed to win more. They are insatiable, and, when the general strike proves their ability to do so, they will have no scruples against expropriating the capitalists. This expropriation will seem the more natural to them then, as they will be fortified by the Syndicalist conception that the capitalists are thieves and have no "right" to their property.

The partial strike of today, in which a comparatively few workers disorganize an industry and force concessions from their employers, is but a miniature of the general strike of the future, in which the whole working class will disorganize all the industries and force the whole capitalist class to give up its ownership of them.

**The General Strike and the Armed Forces.**—Once the general strike is in active operation, the greatest obstacle to its success will be the armed forces of capitalism—soldiers, police, detectives, etc. This formidable force will be used energetically by the capitalists to break the general strike. The Syndicalists have given much study to the problem presented by this force and have found the solution for it. Their proposed tactics are very different from those used by rebels in former revolutions. They are not going to mass themselves and allow themselves to be slaughtered by capitalism's trained murderers in the orthodox way. There is a safer, more effective and more modern method. They are going to defeat the armed forces by disorganizing and demoralizing them.

A fruitful source of this disorganization will be the extreme

difficulty the armed forces will experience in securing supplies and transportation. Modern armies, to be effective, must have immense arsenals, powder works and other industrial establishments behind them to furnish them their supplies of ammunition, arms, food and clothing. They also must have the railroads constantly at their disposal for transportation. When the general strike has halted these industries the army will be stricken with paralysis. Another source of disorganization will be the division of the armed forces into minute detachments to guard the many beleaguered gates of capitalism. The strikers, or revolutionists, will be everywhere, and will everywhere seize or disable whatever capitalist property they can lay their hands on. To protect this property the armed forces will have to be divided into a myriad of guards and scattered along the thousands of miles of railroads and around the many public buildings, bridges, factories, etc. The wealthy capitalists themselves will also need generous guards. The most important industries, such as transportation, mining, etc., will have to be operated in some manner. To do this will require many thousands more of soldiers and police.

The result will be that the armed forces will be minutely subdivided, and through the loss of the solidarity and discipline, from whence they derive their strength, they will cease to be a fighting organization. They will degenerate into a mass of armed individuals scattered far and wide over the country.\* These individuals can be easily overwhelmed and disarmed, or what is more likely, as they will be mostly workmen and in sympathy with the general strike, induced to join the ranks of their striking fellow workers. Once the disorganization of the armed forces is complete the revolutionists will seize the unprotected industries and proceed to reorganize society.

Syndicalists in every country are already actively preparing this disorganization of the armed forces by carrying on a double educational campaign amongst the workers. On the one hand, they are destroying their illusions about the sacredness of capitalist property and encouraging them to seize this property wherever they have the opportunity. On the other, they are teaching working class soldiers not to shoot their brothers and sisters who are in revolt, but, if need be, to shoot their own officers and to desert the army when the crucial moment arrives. This double propaganda of contempt for capitalist property "rights," and anti-militarism, are inseparable from the propagation of the general strike.†

## OBJECTIONS.

**Preliminary Organization.**—A favorite objection of the opponents of the general strike theory (mostly Socialists) is that the success of the general strike implies such a degree of preliminary organization and discipline on the part of the workers that, were

\*This is no far-fetched theory. It is justified by every modern great strike. The big French railroad strike of 1910 is typical. Thousands of soldiers were used as strike breakers, and thousands more scattered along the railroads to guard them. Many more were used, in ones and twos, to guard the bridges, public buildings, etc., in Paris and other cities.

†The student is recommended to read Arnold Roller's excellent 10-cent pamphlet, "The Social General Strike," procurable from George Bauer, P. O. Box 1719, New York City.



they possessed of it, they wouldn't need to strike in order to enforce their demands.

Preliminary organization unquestionably aids very materially to the success of strikes, but all great strikes—which differ only in degree from the general strike—prove to us that this preliminary organization by no means has to be as thorough as the objectors insist. They show us that vast masses of unorganized workers can be readily provoked into revolt by the contagious example of a few, and, also, that these workers, once on strike, are in a few days easily and effectively organized—though for years previous untold efforts have been expended to organize them. They prove that, to a very large extent, great strikes break out spontaneously and, also, that they spontaneously produce the organization so essential to their success. The Lawrence strike of textile workers is a typical instance of a successful strike without preliminary organization. The 24,000 strikers, of twenty nationalities, at the opening of the strike had hardly a fragment of organization; a couple of weeks later they were thoroughly organized.

In all probability, the general strike, at least in its incipient stages, will follow the course that any number of modern great strikes have taken. Only a small part of the workers will be organized; this organized fraction, under some strong stimulus, will provoke a great strike; vast masses of unorganized workers, seeing an opportunity to better their conditions and caught in the general contagion of revolt, will join the strike, organizing themselves meanwhile; the strike will spread; society will be paralyzed, and the revolutionary workers, perceiving their power, will proceed to put an end to capitalism.

The success of the general strike does not necessitate the voluntary striking of every worker. Modern industry is so delicately adjusted, and the division of labor so complete, that if the bulk of the workers in a few of the so-called strategic industries—transportation, coal mining, steel making, etc.—quit work, the rest of the workers would be forced to do likewise through lack of materials and markets for their products. No doubt, the workers forced to quit thus, who would be mostly unorganized, unskilled and the oppressed of the oppressed, would readily fall in with the program of the revolutionists once the general strike was well under way.

The objection that universal preliminary organization is necessary to the success of the general strike is a shallow one. It serves as a convenient excuse for designing politicians and labor leaders to keep labor unions from striking.

**Starvation.**—The general strike will not be broken by the workers being starved into submission, as is often objected. The general strike will be so devastating in its effects that it can last only a few days, during which period, if need be, the workers, accustomed as they are to starvation, and sustained by the enthusiasm of the revolution, could live on the most meager rations. To get these rations, the Syndicalists intend to confiscate, as far as possible, all provisions found in the cities. They will also encourage the numerous poor farmers, tenants and agricultural wage workers to cast their fortunes with them, to revolt against the State, their landlords and employers, and to seize the land they occupy. Until production is normally resumed, the Syndicalists will trade to these farmers the amassed wealth of the cities for their food stuffs. More than one revolution has been starved out by the farmers

refusing to part with their products in exchange for worthless paper money. The Syndicalists have learned this lesson well and intend to give the farmers the substantial commodities they desire in exchange for their products. The army will be so busy protecting capitalist property and so permeated with rebellion that it will be at once incapable and unwilling to prevent this method of provisioning the revolution.

**Bloodshed.**—Another favorite objection of ultra legal and peaceful Socialists is that the general strike would cause bloodshed.

This is probably true, as every great strike is accompanied by violence. Every forward pace humanity has taken has been gained at the cost of untold suffering and loss of life, and the accomplishment of the revolution will probably be no exception. But the prospect of bloodshed does not frighten the Syndicalist worker, as it does the parlor Socialist. He is too much accustomed to risking himself in the murderous industries and on the hellish battlefields in the niggardly service of his masters, to set much value on his life. He will gladly risk it once, if necessary, in his own behalf. He has no sentimental regards for what may happen to his enemies during the general strike. He leaves them to worry over that detail.

The Syndicalist knows that the general strike will be a success, and the timid fears of its opponents will never turn him from it, any more than will their arguments that it is an "illegal," "unfair" and "uncivilized" weapon.

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### III

#### THE DAILY WARFARE OF SYNDICALISM.

**The Partial Strike.**—The Syndicalist is a possibilist. While attending the time he will be strong enough to dispossess his masters by the general strike, he carries on a continual guerrilla warfare with them, winning whatever concessions he can from them. In this daily warfare he uses a variety of tactics—chosen solely because of their effectiveness. Of these, the one most commonly used is the partial strike.

The Syndicalist is opposed, on principle, to the partial strike, as he would much rather settle with capitalism by the general strike. But realizing the impossibility of accomplishing the general strike at present, owing to the uneducated and unorganized state of the working class and knowing, also, that strikes offer the workers the best opportunities to secure this education and organization, he does the next best thing by provoking strikes wherever they have a reasonable chance for success. He makes these strikes as large, as revolutionary and as nearly approaching his general strike idea as possible.

The result of this policy is that in countries where the Syndicalist movement is strong strikes are taking on an extent and revolutionary character, and achieving a success unknown in countries with conservative labor movements. A typical instance of the success of Syndicalist tactics is seen in the case of the printers and building trades' laborers of Paris. The unskilled building trades laborers are Syndicalists, and use revolutionary tactics. The skilled printers are Socialists, and use conservative tactics. Result: "Three-fourths of the printers earn no more, perhaps less, than the building trades laborers."\* Of this success, Emile Vanderveld, a prominent Belgian Socialist, and, by no means, a friend of Syndicalism, was forced to admit in a recent address that the Syndicalist C. G. T. (General Confederation of Labor) of France, with about 400,000 members, has accomplished more practical results than the numerically five times stronger Socialist unions of Germany.†

**The Scab.**—A large portion of the Syndicalists' success in their strikes is due to their energetic treatment of the strikebreaker. According to Syndicalist ethics, a poverty stricken workingman, in his predicament, can do anything save scab. He may beg, borrow, steal, starve or commit suicide, and still retain the friendship and esteem of his fellow workers; but, let him take the place of a striker and he immediately outlaws himself. He becomes so much vermin, to be ruthlessly exterminated. The French Syndicalists are especially merciless towards scabs. They are making strikebreaking such a dangerous profession that scabs are becoming pleasingly scarce and expensive. They literally hunt scabs as they would wild animals. This war on scabs is popularly known as "La chasse aux renards" (The fox chase).

\*"La Vie Ouvrière," April 20, 1912, p. 110.

†Pierre Ramus, "Generalstreik und Direkte Aktion," p. 26.

**Sabotage.**—Next to the partial strike, the most effective weapon used by Syndicalists in their daily warfare on capitalism is sabotage.\* Sabotage is a very general term. It is used to describe all those tactics, save the boycott and the strike proper, which are used by workers to wring concessions from their employers by inflicting losses on them through the stopping or slowing down of industry, turning out of poor product, etc. These tactics, and consequently, the forms of sabotage, are very numerous. Many of them are closely related in character. Often two or more kinds of sabotage are used simultaneously or in conjunction with the strike.

Perhaps the most widely practiced form of sabotage is the restriction by the workers of their output. Disgruntled workers all over the world instinctively and continually practice this form of sabotage, which is often referred to as "soldiering." The English labor unions, by the establishment of maximum outputs for their member, are widely and successfully practicing it. It is a fruitful source of their strength.

The most widely known form of sabotage is that known as "putting the machinery on strike." The Syndicalist goes on strike to tie up industry. If his striking fails to do this, if strike breakers are secured to take his place, he accomplishes his purpose by "putting the machinery on strike" through temporarily disabling it. If he is a railroader he cuts wires, puts cement in switches, signals, etc., runs locomotives into turntable pits, and tries in every possible way to temporarily disorganize the delicately adjusted railroad system. If he is a machinist or factory worker, and hasn't ready access to the machinery, he will hire out as a scab and surreptitiously put emery dust in the bearings of the machinery or otherwise disable it. Oftentimes he takes time by the forelock, and when going on strike "puts the machinery on strike" with him by hiding, stealing or destroying some small indispensable machine part which is difficult to replace. As is the case with all direct-action tactics, even conservative workers, when on strike, naturally practice this form of sabotage—though in a desultory and unorganized manner. This is seen in their common attacks on machines, such as street cars, automobiles, wagons, etc., manned by scabs.

Another kind of sabotage widely practiced by Syndicalists is the tactics of either ruining or turning out inferior products. Thus, by causing their employers financial losses, they force them to grant their demands. The numerous varieties of this kind of sabotage are known by various terms, such as "passive resistance," "obstructionism," "pearled strike," "strike of the crossed arms," etc.

The French railroad strike of 1910 offers a fine example of this type of sabotage. The strike was lost and 3,300 men were discharged because of it. As a protest against this wholesale dis-

\*The term "sabotage" is derived from the old and widespread habit of oppressed and poorly paid workers, acting on the principle of "Poor work for poor wages," to deliberately lessen the quantity and quality of their products. This custom, which is the basic one of all sabotage, known in Scotland as "go canny," was described in France by the argot expression "travailler a coups de sabots." (Pouget, *Le Sabotage*, p. 3.) This may be freely translated: "To work as one wearing wooden shoes;" that is, to work a little slower and more clumsy than one more favorably shod. It was from this argot expression that Emile Pouget, a prominent Syndicalist, derived and coined the word "sabotage" (literally "wooden shoeage"), now in universal use amongst Syndicalists.



charge, an extensive campaign of passive resistance on the railroads was started. The workers worked, but only for the purpose of confusing the railroad system. In the freight sheds shipments of glass were laid flat and heavy boxes piled upon them; "this side up with care" shipments were turned wrong side up; fragile and valuable articles were "accidentally" broken; perishable goods were buried and "lost," or ruined by being placed close to other shipments, such as oils and acids, that spoiled them. Also a complete confusion was caused by the deliberate mixture and missending of shipments. On the roads engines broke down or "died" unaccountably; wires were cut; engines "accidentally" dumped into turntable pits; passenger train schedules were given up, trains arriving and departing haphazard. But the worst confusion came from the missending of cars. Thousands of cars were hauled all over France in a haphazard manner. For instance, the billing of a car of perishable goods intended for the north of France would be so manipulated that the car would be sent to the south of France and probably "lost." At a place just outside of Paris there were, at one time, 1,800 of such "lost" cars—many of them loaded with perishable freight, consigned to no one knew whom. The most ridiculous "accidents" and "mistakes" continually occurred—for this is the humorous form of sabotage. To cite a typical instance: Army officials in one town received notice of the arrival of a carload of dynamite for them. They sent a large detachment of soldiers to convoy it through town. On arrival at its destination the supposed carload of dynamite turned out to be a "lost" shipment of potatoes.

As a result of this pearly strike the railroads had to employ thousands of additional employees in a fruitless attempt to straighten out the ridiculous tangle. They eventually had to re-employ the discharged workers.

The Italian railroads, several years ago, were completely demoralized by a campaign of obstructionism waged by their employees. By the workers simply living up to the letter of the regulations of the companies—which were similar to those in force on all railroads, but which are generally ignored by workers for the sake of expediency—they made it impossible to further operate the railroads until their demands were granted.

For several years the building trades workers of Paris have extensively practiced this form of sabotage. By systematically working slow and clumsy and deliberately spoiling their work and building material, they have demoralized the building industry. The building contractors are unable to cope with these insidious tactics. In 1910 they called a mass meeting of 30,000 capitalists, landlords and architects to devise ways and means to combat them.

This meeting, which, by the way, failed to discover the sabotage antitoxin, was an eloquent testimonial to the effectiveness of sabotage. It is doubtful if any such meeting has ever been necessary to combat strikes, however extensive they may have been. Indeed sabotage has proven so successful that there are many who believe it will finally supersede the strike entirely. In France, so great is the fear of the masters of sabotage, that rebel public speakers refer to it only under danger of long imprisonment. This fear is by no means confined to France. The mere threat of the striking textile workers of Lawrence to sabotage their machinery and product in case they were forced back to work was a powerful deterrent to prevent their masters from breaking their strike. These scared individuals admitted that there are 1,000 ways in

which rebellious workers can spoil cloth without fear of detection.

"Badigeonage" (literally, stone colorage) is another variety of sabotage that has been effectively used. The barbers of Paris forced their employers to grant them their demands by throwing eggs filled with acid against the painted fronts of the barber shops, which, after such treatment, had to be repainted. Of the 2,300 barber shops in Paris 2,000 were subjected to this treatment from 1902 to 1906, while the "badigeonage" campaign lasted.

"La bouche ouverte" (the open mouth) is another type of sabotage often used. By "la bouche ouverte" workers financially hurt their employers by telling the latter's customers of the deceptions practiced upon them. Building trades workers tell building inspectors and architects of poor material used and cause it to be condemned and the work to be done over again, striking waiters expose the filthiness of the restaurants, etc.

Workers engaged in selling their masters' wares directly to the public have effective, even though unnamed, methods of sabotage: The waiter gives extra large portions of food to his customers and undercharges them for it. The drug clerk gives generously of pure drugs, instead of adulterated ones, as he is supposed to. The grocer's clerk forgets to charge for all the articles he has sold, etc.

The various kinds of sabotage are applied singly or collectively, just as circumstances dictate. Some kinds can be used in one industry that cannot be used in another. There are but few industries, however, that cannot be sabotaged in one way or another.

**Fundamental Principle of Sabotage.**—Sabotage has been grossly misrepresented by those interested in fighting it. It has been alleged that saboteurs put strychnine and other poisonous stuffs in food; wreck passenger trains, and otherwise injure the public. These allegations are without foundation, as it is the first principle of working class sabotage that it be directed against the masters' pocketbooks. Practices tending to injure the public, or secure its ill will, are tabooed. The Syndicalists leave it to their masters to jeopardize the public's safety through their adulteration of food, sabotaging of safety appliances, etc.

**Weapon of Minority.**—Sabotage is peculiarly a weapon of the rebel minority. Its successful application, unlike the strike, does not require the co-operation of all the workers interested. A few rebels can, undetected, sabotage and demoralize an industry and force the weak or timid majority to share in its benefits. The Syndicalists are not concerned that the methods of sabotage may be "underhanded" or "unmanly." They are very successful and that is all they ask of them. They scoff at the sentimental objection that sabotage destroys the worker's pride in his work. They prefer to be able to more successfully fight their oppressors, rather than to cater to any false sense of pride.

**Neo-Malthusianism.**—The Syndicalist is a "race suicider." He knows that children are a detriment to him in his daily struggles, and that by rearing them he is at once tying a millstone about his neck and furnishing a new supply of slaves to capitalism. He, therefore, refuses to commit this double error and carries on an extensive campaign to limit births among workers. He has been a powerful factor in reducing births in France, which, according to recent statistics, are annually 35,000 less than the deaths. He is turned from his course neither by the inspired warnings of



physicians nor the paid appeals of patriots. He has no race pride and but little fear. He sees in "race suicide" an effective method of fighting his masters, therefore he uses it.

Another interesting and effective Syndicalist method of solving the child problem is to send strikers' children to surrounding districts, where they are taken care of by other workers until the strike is over. These tactics have been used with telling effect time and again.

The Syndicalist is as "unscrupulous" in his choice of weapons to fight his everyday battles as for his final struggle with capitalism. He allows no considerations of "legality," religion, patriotism, "honor," "duty," etc., to stand in the way of his adoption of effective tactics. The only sentiment he knows is loyalty to the interests of the working class. He is in utter revolt against capitalism in all its phases. His lawless course often lands him in jail, but he is so fired by revolutionary enthusiasm that jails, or even death, have no terrors for him. He glories in martyrdom, consoling himself with the knowledge that he is a terror to his enemies, and that his movement, today sending chills along the spine of international capitalism, tomorrow will put an end to this monstrosity.

#### IV

#### SYNDICALISM AND POLITICAL ACTION.\*

Syndicalism is a revolutionary labor union movement and philosophy calculated to answer all the needs of the working class in its daily struggles, in the revolution, and in the organization of the new society. It rejects entirely and bitterly opposes the working class political movement—whose chief representative is the international Socialist Party—which has set the same task for itself.

Syndicalism's rejection of political action and opposition to the Socialist movement are due to: (1) the superiority of direct action to political action; (2) that the Syndicalist and Socialist movements are rivals and cannot co-operate.

##### (1) Superiority of Direct Action.

**Achievements of Direct Action and Political Action.**—The superiority of direct action to political action in winning concessions from capitalism is clearly seen in a comparison of the achievements to date of the direct action and political action movements.

All over the world practically all substantial concessions, such as shortening of the working day, increases of wages, protection in industry, etc., wrung by the workers from their masters, have been won through the medium of the labor unions. The political parties, on the other hand, have accomplished practically nothing for the working class. Karl Kautsky, a prominent Socialist writer, writing of what the workers have accomplished by political action in Germany—where they have by far the largest political party in the country—says:—

"The period of rapid change after the fall of Bismarck brought some little progress in Germany and France. In 1891 was enacted the law which established for women—who until then were unprotected—the eleven-hour maximum workday. In 1892 this regulation was also introduced in France.

"That was all! Since then no progress worthy of the name has been achieved. In Germany we have, in the entire seventeen years, come so far that just now the ten-hour workday for women has been established. The male workers yet remain fully unprotected. On the field of protection for male workers, as well as those of all other social reforms, complete stagnation reigns."†

This is the proud seventeen-year record of the great German Socialist Party, which has absorbed untold efforts of German revolutionists. Its previous twenty-five years of history are even still more barren of results. Compared to the achievements of the German labor unions, which, by no means, use modern tactics, the petty conquests of the Socialist Party dwindle into insignificance. The labor unions, though considered of minor importance an

\*In this pamphlet the term "political action" is used in its ordinary and correct sense. Parliamentary action resulting from the exercise of the franchise is political action. Parliamentary action cannot command the influence of direct action tactics, such as the passage of the minimum wage bill in England during the recent coal strike, is not the reaction. It is simply a registration of direct action.

†Kautsky, "Der Weg zur Macht," p. 77.



neglected, and even opposed, by the political leaders of the German working class, have in all cases secured great advances in wages, shortening of the workday, and other important benefits, too numerous to mention, for their members. Had the workers composing them been without labor unions and dependent solely upon the Socialist Party to defend their interests, they would have been reduced to a condition of serfdom.

The same political stagnation that Kautsky complains of in Germany exists in every capitalist country. This is especially true of the United States, where the workers, in spite of their continual dabbling in politics, have gained practically nothing by political action. Wherever they enjoy higher standards of living, safeguards in industry, etc., these are directly traceable to their labor unions. Unorganized workers are ordinarily wretched slaves suffering the lowest standard of living, the greatest exploitation and exposure to danger in industry. They lead a mere animal existence and are a fair example of what workers of all kinds would be were they destitute of labor unions.

**Reasons for Superiority of Direct Action.**—The chief cause for the greater success of the labor unions than the political party is found in the superior efficacy of direct action to political action. The former is a demonstration of real power, the latter merely an expression of public sentiment. A couple of instances, taken from late labor history, will illustrate this point:

During the recent Lawrence textile strike, 24,000 workers, in the course of a couple of months, won important concessions in wages and improved working conditions, not only for themselves, but also for some 350,000 other workers in the same industry who took no part in the strike. In England, 1,000,000 coal miners, during their recent short strike, forced the British government to adopt the so-called "revolutionary" minimum wage bill. This strike shattered the long-accepted doctrine of the irresponsible relations between employer and employed in England. It is now coming to be a recognized principle that the workers have a right to a living wage at least.

For either of these groups of workers to have secured the same ends by political action would have been next to impossible. Of themselves alone they never could have done so, as minorities are negligible quantities in politics. To have accomplished even the preliminary steps to such victories they would have had to secure the political support of practically the whole working class. Even then they would have had no guarantee that their efforts had not all been in vain, as the financial powers—who are only to be coerced by demonstrations of force—have time and again flagrantly disobeyed the political mandates of the working class. The many working class laws declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court and the hundreds of "dead letter" laws on the statute books of the various states are sufficient proofs of the masters' contempt for working class political action. It is to be remarked that the Supreme Court hasn't the power to declare unconstitutional the eight-hour day, improved working conditions, any other concessions won by direct action, even though they been won by the most insignificant minority of workers. This eloquent testimonial to the efficacy of direct action.

Another tribute to the value of direct action—next in importance to the growth of the Syndicalist movement itself—is the tendency of Socialist politicians to recognize and concede

functions to the labor unions. At first these politicians could see no good whatever in the labor unions and openly fought them.\* However, little by little, they have had to, at least partially, recognize their worth and to quit their open warfare upon them, until now they have been universally forced to assign to them the task of maintaining the standard of living of the workers under capitalism. Many European Socialists even advocate winning the universal franchise by the general strike, which they have vainly tried to win by political action. The Belgian Socialist Party took this humiliating stand at its last convention.

Another cause of the inferior achievements of working class political action is that the Socialist Party does not take advantage of even the slight opportunities it has to help the workers. The Socialist Party, all over the world, unlike the labor unions, which are composed solely of workers with common economic interests, is composed of individuals of all classes—however conflicting their interests may be. It necessarily organizes on the basis of political opinion, not economic interests. The non-working class elements control it everywhere and inject themselves into whatever offices the party wins. Once in office these ambitious politicians fritter away their time with various vote-catching schemes, such as the reduction of taxes, "clean government," "social peace," etc., while the working class is starving. They neglect to exploit even the few opportunities political action offers to improve the conditions of the working class.

**Political Action as a Revolutionary Weapon.**—In addition to being superior to the political party in accomplishments to date, the labor unions are also manifestly superior as the means to bring about the revolution.

Socialists, from time to time, have indorsed several theories for the expropriation of the capitalist class. The founders of Socialism, under the influence of the French revolutions, believed that the workers would violently seize control of the government and expropriate the capitalists. This theory was almost universally held by Socialists until the military systems in Europe reached the point of development where a mere fraction of the people, in the army, could defeat the balance in open warfare.† It was succeeded by the ridiculous makeshift theory that the workers, after capturing the government by the ballot, will peacefully vote the capitalists' expropriation—the latter being supposed to stand unresistingly by while their property is being "legally" taken away from them. This absurd notion is in turn being supplanted by the theory that the workers, after getting control of the government, will buy the industries from their present owners. Modern Socialists, with but few exceptions, generally indorse one or the other of these two latter theories. We will consider them in turn.

**Confiscation Without Remuneration.**—Forty-three years ago, Liebknecht, who believed "the social question a question of power, and, like all questions of power, to be settled on the streets and battlefields," disposed of those dreamers who supposed the capitalists will allow their property to be voted away from them. In his pamphlet "Die politische Stellung der Sozialdemokratie, etc.,"

\*An early German political argument against the labor unions was that they were relics of the old guilds, and that the workers composing them were the most reactionary of the working class.

†The failure of the Paris Commune was another factor in the rejection of this theory. (See chapter VII).



amongst other gems he has the following: "However, let it be accepted that the government makes no use of its power, and, as is the dream of some Socialistic 'phantasy politicians,' a Socialist majority of the Reichstag is secured—what would this majority do? Hic rhodus hic salta. This is the moment to revolutionize society and the State. The majority passes a 'world's historical' law, the new era is born—alas, no; a company of soldiers chase the Socialists out of the temple. And, if the gentlemen don't submit to this calmly, a couple of policemen will escort them to the city jail, where they will have time to think over their quixotic project."

Since Liebknecht wrote the above the developments have all been such as to render it still more unlikely that the capitalists can be "legally" expropriated without remuneration. Not only has the Socialist Party become so conservative that it is inconceivable that it could ever rise to the revolutionary heights of Liebknecht's supposed parliamentary majority, but even representative government itself is, as far as the workers are concerned, obsolete. The great capitalist interests have corrupted it root and branch. They buy wholesale whatever legislators, judges, etc., they need, just as they buy other commodities necessary in their industries.\* If the puppet government, for some reason or other, does anything contrary to their wishes, they either coerce it into reasonableness again or calmly ignore it. To suppose that this lickspittle institution, and especially under the stimulus of the Socialists, can ever forcibly expropriate the capitalists, is absurd.

**Confiscation With Remuneration.**—The Socialist plan of buying the industries is also a dream. The capitalists will never voluntarily sell the industries that lay them their golden eggs. If they do dispose of them to the State it will only be because the new financial arrangements suit them better. The inherently weak State can never force them to make a bargain unfavorable to themselves. To do this will require power, and this power lies alone in direct action.

But it is idle to even speculate on the aroused workers cowardly stooping to try to buy back the industries stolen from them. When the psychological moment arrives, the working class, hungering for emancipation, will adopt the only method at its disposal and put an end to capitalism with the general strike, as outlined in a previous chapter.

Thus, in both achievements to date and in promise for the future, direct action is far superior to political action. The political party has accomplished almost nothing in the past and offers even less promise for the future; whereas the labor union has won practically all the conquests of the workers in the past and also offers them the only means to the revolution.

\*The much-heralded custom of demanding signed resignations from Socialist candidates for office has proven a distinct failure in keeping Socialist office holders free from this universal corruption, which implies nothing short of the bankruptcy of representative government.

## SYNDICALISM AND POLITICAL ACTION—(Continued).

### (2) Rivalry Between Syndicalist and Socialist Movements.

The Syndicalist movement does not co-operate with, but, on the contrary, opposes the Socialist movement, because, from long experience, it has learned that the two movements are rivals to each other and cannot co-operate together. This rivalry flows naturally from the conflicting theories upon which the two movements are built.

**The Socialist "Two Wings" Theory.**—According to this universal Socialist theory the many problems faced by the working class in its battle for industrial freedom are of two distinct and separate kinds, viz., political and economic. It is asserted that these questions are so fundamentally different that two distinct organizations must be built to solve them; one, the Socialist Party, to operate solely in the political "field," and the other, the labor unions, to operate solely on the economic "field." The two "wings" of the labor movement are thus to complement each other, each devoting itself to its peculiar problems.

According to this theory the Socialist Party is by far the most important organization of the two, as the political questions, over whose solution it has sole jurisdiction, are much more numerous and important than the economic questions under the jurisdiction of the labor unions. Indeed, according to it, the labor unions are merely auxiliaries to the political party in its great work of the emancipation of the working class. Their chief functions are to hold up the standard of living of the workers\* "to mitigate, as far as possible, the ravages of capitalism" by acting as benefit associations, and to serve as voting machines until the political party shall have overthrown capitalism.

**The Syndicalist Theory.**—The Syndicalists quarrel violently with the "two wings" theory, which gives to the labor unions functions of minor importance. They maintain that there is but one kind of industrial question—the economic—and that but one working class organization—the labor unions—is necessary. They assert that the so-called political "field" does not exist and that the Socialist Party is a usurper. They have proven time and again that they can solve the many so-called political questions by direct action. By strikes, sabotage, etc., they force governments to take swift action on old age pensions, minimum wages, militarism, international relations, child labor, sanitation of workshops, mines, etc., and many other questions supposedly under the natural jurisdiction of the Socialist Party. And, as has been pointed out, the Syndicalists have no need for the Socialist Party, neither in the accomplishment of the revolution nor in the organization of the new society—the labor unions also sufficing for these tasks. The Syndicalists

\*This niggardly concession was made to the labor unions by the politicians only when it could be no longer withheld.



insist that the labor unions alone represent the interests of the working class and that the Socialist Party is an interloper and a parasite.\*

#### THE WAR BETWEEN SYNDICALISTS AND SOCIALISTS.

The result of these opposing conceptions of the functions of the labor union is a world-wide fight between political and direct actionists for the control of the labor union movement. Both are endeavoring to model it according to their theories. The Socialists are trying to subordinate it to the Socialist Party and the Syndicalists are bitterly contesting this attempt and trying to give the labor union its full development.

**Causes of the War.**—The fight between the Syndicalists and Socialists is inevitable. On the one hand, the Syndicalists, believing in the all-sufficiency of the labor union, naturally resist all Socialist attempts to limit its functions, while, on the other hand, the Socialists, for the sake of their party, are forced to combat the encroachments of the labor union. This latter statement admits of easy explanation. The first consideration for the success of the Socialist program is the capture of the State by the Socialist Party. To do this requires the support of practically the entire working class. Logically, any influence tending to alienate any of this support is an enemy to the Socialist Party and is treated as such. Everyday experience teaches that revolutionary labor unions, by winning great concessions for their members, by successfully operating in the so-called political "field," and by carrying on an incessant anti-political campaign—which is inevitable if a union is to escape the political apron strings and take vigorous action—have a decided tendency to make these workers slight, or even reject entirely, the much-promising but little-accomplishing Socialist Party.

The Socialists have noted this and correctly view the Syndicalist movement—even as the Syndicalists do the Socialist movement—as a rival to their own. They recognize that every great victory it wins pulls working class support from their party and is a defeat for their movement, and that every defeat the Syndicalist movement suffers, by driving workers back to the Socialist Party, is a victory for the latter. They know that the Syndicalist and Socialist movements, both claiming jurisdiction over the whole working class, cannot exist in harmony. Hence, they logically fight the Syndicalist movement and attempt to subordinate the labor unions to the Socialist Party. In their efforts to conserve the interests of the Socialist Party they even go so far as to deliberately break strikes, and thus compromise the interests of the working class. Modern labor history is full of such instances. To cite but a few:

**Socialist Treachery.**—In 1904-6 the French labor unions, in the face of strong Socialist opposition, carried on a vigorous national propaganda for a universal eight-hour day, to take effect May 1, 1906. As the appointed day approached an epidemic of strikes broke out all over France and a revolution seemed imminent. At this critical juncture, the Socialist journal "Le Reveil du Nord" "discovered" that the whole movement was a conspiracy to over-

\*The same attitude obtains towards all other so-called working class political parties.

throw the republic and re-establish the monarchy. The government, using the supposed conspiracy as a pretext, threw some 50,000 troops into Paris and many of the strike leaders into jail. This action, coupled with the evil effects on the workers of such a statement coming from so-called revolutionists, unquestionably did much to detract from the success of the movement.\*

In 1910, the French railroad unions declared a national general strike on all the railroads in France. The Socialists, fearing the consequences to their political party of such a great direct-action victory as this strike promised to be, deliberately broke the strike by keeping at work the railroaders on the strategic East R. R., whose unions they dominated. This road, the most strongly organized in France, at the behest of the notorious Socialist Prime Minister Briand, hauled scabs and soldiers to break the strike. The failure of the East R. R. to strike threw confusion into the ranks of strikers and the strike was almost completely lost. It was, though a wonderful exhibition of the power of direct action, in many respects a great Syndicalist defeat, and, consequently, indirectly, a great Socialist victory.

Arnold Roller, in his pamphlet, "The Social General Strike," cites many similar instances of Socialist betrayal of working class interests. To quote but one:—

"In February, 1902, the proletariat of Barcelona rose under the call of the general strike and was able to resist the police and army for a whole week. Pablo Iglesias, the leader of the Spanish Social Democracy, requested his followers everywhere to act as strike breakers and denounciators of the general strike. In some districts the Socialists even went so far as to send, during the general strike struggle, deputations to the government to announce their loyalty and to assure them that they, as law-abiding citizens, had nothing to do with the 'revolt.'"

**The Campaign Against Direct Action.**—In addition to fighting Syndicalism by breaking revolutionary strikes, Socialists universally combat it by carrying on a continual warfare upon it in all its manifestations, both in and out of the unions. Indeed, it is one of the regular functions of Socialist politicians to drug labor unions into quietude by telling the workers by word and pen what cannot be done by direct action.†

The Socialists are naturally inveterate enemies of the general strike—the general strike many of them favor as the means to the conquest of the universal suffrage is distinctly understood to be very different to the general strike of the Syndicalists; it is an auxiliary to political action, not a substitute for it—and they have even forbidden the discussion of it in the German labor unions. They are also rabid opponents of sabotage. Pouget, in "Le Sabotage," says that in the C. G. T. conventions in France the number of Socialist delegates present could always be determined by the vote against sabotage as a working class weapon. At its last convention the American Socialist Party showed itself "true to name" by adopting a resolution recommending the expulsion of all party members advocating the use of sabotage.

\*Kritsky, "L'Evolution du Syndicalisme en France," p. 359-370.

†The immense labor unions of Germany, which are controlled by the Socialists, are fair types of Socialist unions. They seldom strike, and never use modern tactics. Possessed of the latent power to overthrow capitalism they content themselves with serving as voting machines and mutual benefit societies.



**Retaliation by Syndicalists and Some Consequences.**—The Syndicalists are not tamely submitting to these attacks from the Socialists but are vigorously resisting them. Their opposition is carried on chiefly by a campaign of anti-parliamentarism, by abstinence from voting and by getting control of the labor unions and plainly showing them to be more effective organizations than the Socialist Party.

In France, where the Syndicalists have secured almost complete control of the labor unions, they have clearly shown the inherent conflict of jurisdiction between the Syndicalist and Socialist movements, and the necessity for the subjugation of the former to the latter if they are to co-operate together. A couple of years ago the Socialist Party had an old-age pension bill (popularly known as "Viviani's old-age pensions for the dead") enacted. The C. G. T., the French general labor organization, condemned the law and decided to resist its enforcement by all the means at its disposal. In the resultant attempt of the government to force the law upon the unwilling workers the Socialist Party openly allied itself with the government against the C. G. T.

This incident made it clear that if the labor movement is to be spared the humiliation of having one of its "wings" fighting against what the other one has fought for, either the labor unions must be subordinated to the Socialist Party and forced to unquestioningly accept whatever doubtful bargains it makes, or the Socialist Party must go out of existence.

**"The Nigger in the Woodpile."**—This unseemly warfare between the two "wings" of the labor movement may seem incomprehensible to the novice. He may ask: "If the two movements are incompatible, and if the Syndicalist movement has proven itself so far superior to the Socialist movement, why isn't the Socialist Party given up and the labor unions developed?" The explanation is simple: Though there are undoubtedly many sincere workers who honestly believe in the superiority of political action to direct action, and who are conscientiously active in the upbuilding of the Socialist Party, they are but a minor factor in the latter's constant betrayal of the interests of the workers. This is natural, as it is incomprehensible that rebel workers would deliberately betray their own interests for the sake of an organization that wins them nothing. The real force behind the Socialist war on Syndicalism is the horde of doctors, lawyers, preachers and other non-working class elements universally infesting and controlling the Socialist Party. These elements, who have no economic interests in common with the workers, see in the working class revolt simply a fine opportunity to worm themselves into the innumerable rich places of power and affluence in the State. Consequently they defend, by sophistry and treachery to the working class, the political movement necessary to their conquest of the State.

The prosaic, but aspiring, Syndicalist movement, with its few miserable official positions—the C. G. T. of France has but three regularly paid officials at \$50.00 per month each—which are, moreover, often fraught with great personal danger of imprisonment, has no attractions for the ambitious politicians. The fact that it is more effective in defending the interests of the working class than is the Socialist Party is of no moment to them. It doesn't "pay" as good as the Socialist Party, and, as it is a competitor of the latter, it must be suppressed.

**Harmonizers of Socialism and Syndicalism.**—There is a group of Socialists in the United States who are attempting to harmonize the Socialist political movement and the revolutionary direct-action movement on a somewhat original theory. They would have the labor movement consist of revolutionary labor unions on the one hand, and the Socialist Party on the other. The labor unions would be the superior organization, the Socialist Party being a sort of helper to them. The functions of the Socialist Party are described by Wm. D. Haywood and Frank Bohn in their pamphlet, "Industrial Socialism," p. 54: "The great purpose of the Socialist Party is to seize the powers of government and thus prevent them from being used by the capitalists against the workers. With Socialists in political offices the workers can strike and not be shot. They can picket shops and not be arrested and imprisoned. Freedom of speech and of the press, now often abolished by the tyrannical capitalists, will be secured to the working class. Then they can continue the shop organization and the education of the workers. To win the demands made on the industrial field it is absolutely necessary to control the government, as experience shows strikes to have been lost through the interference of courts and militia."

At first glance this plan of capturing the State solely for the purpose of preventing the use of the courts and armed forces against the workers seems plausible, but experience has shown it to be impracticable. As pointed out earlier, to carry out any national political program involves the construction of a great political organization. This, as has been time and again demonstrated, the workers refuse to do unless it can win important concessions for them—which is impossible—or the workers have not yet learned the value of direct action—which condition the Industrial Socialists by no means desire. Let the workers once get this knowledge—as Haywood and Bohn would have them—and they will build up their labor unions and desert the barren Socialist Party. They will also be inevitably forced to fight the latter defending their unions from the attacks of the designing Socialist strikers, who will strenuously resist all attempts to strip their monopoly of power or prestige. Vague expectations of one day being able to use the armed forces in their own interests—expectations which have been sadly disappointed wherever Socialists have gotten into power—will never prove a sufficient incentive to make the direct actionists perform the huge, if not impossible, task of purging the Socialist Party of its non-working class elements and building up the political organization necessary to capture the State. An organization which, moreover, would be cursed with all the weaknesses of parliamentarism and, consequently, doomed to failure.

#### OTHER POINTS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN SYNDICALISM AND SOCIALISM.

Besides the inherent and incurable jurisdictional quarrel between the Syndicalist and Socialist movements there are numerous other matters over which they are in direct conflict. A few of these will be discussed:

**Society.**—A fundamental point of conflict between Syndicalists and Socialists is their respective attitude towards Society.

The Socialist Party announces itself as the party of Society and



proposes to defend its interests even before those of the working class. Karl Kautsky, the well-known German Socialist writer, expresses the Socialist position when he says: "Social development stands higher than the interests of the proletariat, and the Socialist Party cannot protect proletariat interests which stand in the way of social development."<sup>\*</sup>

The chief result of this theory and the reason for its invention is that in great strikes, where the welfare of Society is alleged to be in danger, the Socialists have a good excuse for breaking these strikes. This was the excuse of the Socialists for keeping the railroaders at work during the recent great Swedish strike. Recently Emile Vandervelde, the leader of the Belgian Socialists, questioned as to his attitude to strikers in the public service, in case he became elected Minister, replied: "What would I do? Exactly what we do when there is a strike in the personnel of one of our co-operatives. I would exhaust all the means of conciliation; I would do everything to avoid the struggle. But, if in spite of my efforts, the strike broke out I would say to the personnel: 'I have exhausted all means of conciliation, I have satisfied your demands as far as possible, but I can concede nothing more without compromising the general welfare. And now, since you force me to defend this general welfare against the tyranny of your trade interest, I oppose to your incontestable right to strike, the right, not less incontestable, to replace you by workers more devoted to the interests of the community.'"<sup>†</sup> Thus the government employees are warned that if they strike they will be replaced by Socialist scabs.

The Syndicalist takes no cognizance of Society. He is interested only in the welfare of the working class and consistently defends it. He leaves the rag-tag mass of parasites that make up the non-working class part of Society to look after their own interests. It is immaterial to him what becomes of them so long as the working class advances. He is not afraid of "turning the wheels of progress backward," in thus constantly confining himself to the interests of the working class, as he knows that freeing the working class entirely he will give social development the greatest stimulus it has ever known.

**The State.**—The Socialist is a statist. He considers the State as the logical directing force of Society and proposes to perpetuate it in the future society by confiding to its care the ownership and management of all the industries. He is a vigorous advocate of "law and order" and preaches implicit obedience to the State's mandates, good, bad and indifferent. He recognizes the legal rights of the capitalists to their property and proposes to change the laws that he says give them this ownership.

The Syndicalist, on the other hand, is strictly an anti-statist. He considers the State a meddling capitalist institution. He resists its tyrannical interference in his affairs as much as possible and proposes to exclude it from the future society. He is a radical opponent of "law and order," as he knows that for his unions to be "legal" in their tactics would be for them to become impotent. He recognizes no rights of the capitalists to their property, and is going to strip them of it, law or no law.

Constant quarrels rage between the Syndicalists and the Socialists over this matter of legality; the Socialists trying to make

the unions "legal" and the Syndicalists trying to make them effective. There is grave danger that in some great revolutionary crisis—which is bound to be "illegal"—the Socialists, in their zeal for "law and order," and the preservation of the State, will ally themselves with the capitalists and proceed to extremes against the outlaw Syndicalists, and thus lead the workers to a terrible defeat. This tendency is already a marked one, as the cited instance of the old-age pension bill in France proves.

**Patriotism and Militarism.**—The Socialist is necessarily a patriot and a militarist. According to his theory, for the workers of a given country to emancipate themselves, they must control their government. Naturally, for this government to have any power it is necessary that it enjoy political independence. Hence the Socialist considers each nation justified in warring on other nations to secure or maintain this independence. The international Socialist Party stands committed to this patriotic policy. This, of course, involves militarism, and Socialists the world over are militarists. August Bebel, the German Socialist leader, in his book, "Nicht Stehendes Heer, sondern Volkswehr," urged that, in order to the better defend Germany, every able-bodied male should be a soldier from earliest boyhood to old age. He says school and work boys should be drilled during their spare time, Sundays, evenings, etc. Jaures, the noted French Socialist leader, advocates that the sons of labor union officials be placed in command of the companies of boy soldiers he would organize to defend France. The militarism of various other Socialist leaders, such as Ramsey McDonald of England, and Pablo Iglesias of Spain, is notorious.

The Syndicalist is a radical anti-patriot. He is a true internationalist, knowing no country. He opposes patriotism because it creates feelings of nationalism among the workers of the various countries and prevents co-operation between them, and also, because of the militarism it inevitably breeds. He views all forms of militarism with a deadly hatred, because he knows from bitter experience that the chief function of modern armies is to break strikes, and that wars of any kind are fatal to the labor movement. He depends solely on his labor unions for protection from foreign and domestic foes alike and proposes to put an end to war between the nations by having the workers in the belligerent countries go on a general strike and thus make it impossible to conduct wars.

This Syndicalist method of combating war is looked upon with violent disfavor by the Socialists, who consider war a political question and, therefore, no concern of the labor unions. A few years ago, during a Morocco crisis, the C. G. T. sent a delegate to the Socialist labor unions of Germany to organize an anti-war demonstration to propagate the plan of meeting a declaration of war by an international general strike. He was referred to the Socialist Party as having jurisdiction, and thus action on the matter was avoided. At the international Socialist convention, in Copenhagen, 1910, the German Socialist Party delegates successfully opposed a similar proposition on the grounds that the labor unions alone had authority to declare a general strike. Thus the Socialist politicians, on one occasion, referred the question to the Socialist Party, and on the other to the labor unions, and in both cases avoided taking action on this momentous question. This is a fair example of Socialist perfidy when the interests of the working class conflict with those of the Socialist Party.

<sup>\*</sup>"Zur Agrar Frage," p. 318.

<sup>†</sup>"Risveglio," Geneva, May 25, 1912.



The Syndicalist and Socialist movements have a hundred fundamental points of conflict. They are absolutely unharmonizable, either on the orthodox Socialist theory or that of the Industrial Socialists. The Syndicalists, realizing that the two movements cannot co-operate, have chosen the more efficient one, the direct action movement, and are developing it and vigorously fighting its natural enemy, the political movement. This fight is to the finish and the rebel worker must get "on one side of the barricade or the other." He cannot stay on both sides. And if he calmly studies the two movements he will surely arrive at the Syndicalist conclusion that the direct action movement is the sole hope of the working class, and that the parasitic political movement, next to the capitalist class itself, is the most dangerous enemy of the working class.

## VI

### THE RELATIONS OF SYNDICALISM TO ANARCHISM, SOCIALISM AND INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM.

In revolutionary circles a great deal of confusion exists as to the relations of Syndicalism to Anarchism, Socialism and Industrial Unionism. A few words on this subject may, therefore, be timely.

**The Two Great Revolutionary Movements.**—Almost since the conception of the revolutionary idea, revolutionists have divided themselves into two general schools—Anarchist and Socialist—and have organized themselves accordingly. These schools are the antipodes of each other in many respects.

The Anarchist is an individualist. He is an anti-democrat, having a supreme contempt for majority rule. He opposes authoritarianism in all its manifestations. He is an inveterate enemy of the State and its laws, and would establish a society in which they will not exist. In his tactics he is a direct actionist.

The Socialist, on the other hand, is a collectivist. He is a democrat and a firm believer in majority rule. Yet with comical inconsistency he also favors authoritarianism and always institutes strong systems of centralization in his vast organizations. He is a statist and legalitarian par excellence, and would perpetuate the State in the future society. He is a political actionist. The famed collectivist doctrine of the class struggle was formulated and propagated by him—Anarchists generally either ignoring or repudiating it.

**From Impossibilism to Possibilism.**—Originally both the Anarchist and Socialist movements were possibilist. Both scorned to strive for petty concessions from capitalism and carried on a vigorous propaganda of their ideas, both believing that when they had created sufficient revolutionary sentiment capitalism would be overthrown by a sudden popular uprising.

The Socialist movement was the first to recede from this impossibilist position. Its parliamentary representatives early began bargaining with those of other parties. This bargaining and compromise has gone on until the Socialist movement has become strictly possibilist and strives for all kinds of petty reforms. This evolution from impossibilism to possibilism has produced a pro-

found effect on the Socialist movement. It has given up its old vitalizing doctrine of the class struggle and has degenerated into a movement of the poor and discontented of all classes against the common oppressor.

Being less exposed to temptation, the Anarchist movement, as a whole, remained possibilist much longer than did the Socialist. Its first important step toward possibilism was taken in the famed "raid" (mentioned in following chapter) when large numbers of Anarchists joined and captured the French trade unions. This Anarchist "raid" on the labor unions brought three great movements into direct contact—viz., Anarchist, Socialist, and Trade Union. A general flux of ideals, tactics, organization forms, theories, etc., took place. The outcome of this was that the Anarchists, retaining their individualistic principles but little modified, their hatred for the State, etc., fairly incorporated the Trade Union movement into their own. They adopted the labor union as their fighting organization form, and its peculiar type of direct action as their fighting tactics. They also adopted the ex-Socialist doctrine of the class struggle—which had long been anomalous in the all-class Socialist movement—as their fighting theory. In thus adopting a new fighting organization form, tactics and theories, they gave birth to the possibilist Anarchist or Syndicalist movement which is everywhere rapidly absorbing the impossibilist Anarchist movement. Syndicalism has placed the Anarchist movement upon a practical, effective basis. It has at once given it a clear-cut aim (the emancipation of the working class) and the most powerful organizations in modern society (the labor unions) to achieve this aim. Before the advent of Syndicalism the Anarchist movement confusedly and ineffectively appealed to all society and was destitute of organization. Like the Socialist movement, the Anarchist movement has also become possibilist.

**The Antagonism Between Anarchism and Syndicalism.**—Syndicalism, besides its continual warfare with Socialism, which has already been sufficiently explained and described, has also an important point of quarrel with Anarchism. Though both movements are at one in the matters of principle, ideals, etc., there is much friction between them. The cause for this is not hard to find.

The Anarchist movement proper is an educational one. It says in effect: "The misery of society is due to its ignorance. Remove this ignorance and you abolish the misery." Consequently it places strong emphasis on its attempt to found the modern school; its educational campaigns against the State, church, marriage, sex slavery, etc. Anarchism is striving for an intellectual revolution.

The Syndicalist movement, on the other hand, is a fighting movement. It ascribes the miseries of the workers to the wages system and expends practically all its efforts to build a strong fighting organization with which to combat and finally destroy capitalism. Syndicalism is striving for an economic revolution.

The Syndicalist accepts on principle the Anarchist positions on the modern school, neo-Malthusianism, marriage, individualism, religion, art, the drama, literature, etc., that go to make up the intellectual revolution; but he expends energy upon their propagation only in so far as they contribute to the success of his bread and butter fighting organization. He opposes capitalist institutions in the measure that they oppose him. He does not combat them from any theoretical standpoint. If the church opposes him,



he fights it in return. Otherwise he leaves it alone and devotes his energies to combating more active enemies. Consequently many of the intellectual favorites of the Anarchists receive scant courtesy from him. The Anarchist objects to this, calling the Syndicalist a "pork chop" revolutionist, and tries to make an "intellectual revolutionist of him. But in vain, as the Syndicalist considers the economic revolution a hundredfold more important than the "intellectual" revolution, and is bending all his efforts to its accomplishment.

**Syndicalism and Industrial Unionism.**—Unlike Syndicalism, the Industrial Union movement of Anglo-Saxon countries is a product of the Socialist movement. It was officially born at the gathering of Socialist politicians who founded the I. W. W. in Chicago, 1905. Although since then it has progressed far toward Syndicalism by the rejection of political action and the adoption of direct action tactics, many traces still linger of its Socialist origin. In these it naturally differs from Syndicalism. A few of the more important ones will be briefly cited:

The Industrial Union movement is universally engaged in a utopian attempt to build a new and revolutionary labor movement independent of all other labor organizations. Industrial Unionists are in the impossibilist stage of development. Syndicalists, on the contrary, are strictly possibilists, they having emerged from impossibilism, and wherever their movement normally develops they revolutionize the old unions rather than build new ones. The Industrial Union movement is essentially democratic and statist, while the Syndicalist movement is radically opposed to democracy and the State. The Industrial Unionists propose to operate the industries in the future society by a government composed of representatives of the unions, whereas, the Syndicalists propose to exclude the State entirely from the new society. Industrial Unionists are authoritarians, their national labor unions being highly centralized and their local unions destitute of autonomy, whereas Syndicalists are anti-authoritarians, their national labor unions being decentralized and their local unions possessed of complete autonomy. Another difference between Industrial Unionism and Syndicalism is that the former puts emphasis on the industrial form of organization and the "One Big Union" idea, while the latter emphasizes revolutionary tactics. Industrial Unionists also preach the doctrine that there are no leaders in the revolutionary movement, whereas a fundamental principle of Syndicalists is that of the militant minority (outlined in Chapter IX.).

## VII

### HISTORY OF SYNDICALISM.

Syndicalism originated in France. From there it has spread all over the civilized world. That France, though comparatively a backward country economically, should be the birthplace of this ultra-modern movement is not surprising.\* For various reasons, which lack of space forbids enumerating here, France has ever been in the vanguard of social progress—the other nations sluggishly following in its wake, profiting by its social experiences. During the past 125 years it has been the scene of numerous revolutions, often embracing the most fundamental changes in social relations. It has passed through so many of these radical social changes that it has been well termed "the home of revolutions." As a result of these revolutions, the French working class, which played a prominent part in all of them, has had the most varied experiences of any working class in the world. It is only natural that its labor movement should have reached the highest stage of development. To briefly cite merely a few of these experiences will show how extensive they have been and how natural it is that Syndicalism has resulted from them.

### THE GAMUT OF SOCIAL EXPERIENCE.

**The Great Revolution.**—The French working class, 120 years ago, saw the infamous tyrannies and class distinctions of the ancient regime overthrown, and "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" established by the great revolution. Later it saw these tyrannies and class distinctions reappear in new forms. It learned that through the revolution it had merely changed masters and that the high-sounding equalitarian phrases of the revolution were but mockeries.

**Utopian Socialism.**—After this great disappointment its militants conceived the idea of Socialism as the solution of their problem. At first they drew up beautiful utopias of co-operative societies, believing that the capitalists and the workers had but to learn of their advantages to accept them. They even went so far as to establish offices to which the capitalists could throng to give up their property to the new society. These utopias naturally failed.

**State Socialism From Above.**—In 1848, after a long propaganda of socialistic ideas, the first serious attempt was made to establish Socialism. As a result of a sudden eruption, Louis Phillipe was driven from the throne, principally through the efforts of the workers, who found themselves practically in control of the situation. The workers demanded the establishment of Socialism and agreed to starve three months while the government was inaugurating it. They finally forced the reluctant and weak government to appoint a committee "to bring about the revolution." Among other "rights" eventually granted them, the workers were given the "right" to work, and great national workshops were estab-

\*The economic backwardness of France is often used as an argument against Syndicalism.



lished in Paris at which thousands were given employment. The capitalists, daily growing stronger, decided to put an end to this state Socialism. They abolished the workshops, giving the unemployed the option of starving or joining the army. The workers revolted and for three days held a large portion of Paris. They finally listened to the appeal of a politician and surrendered, only to see thousands of their best slaughtered in the terrible June massacres.

**Co-Operatives.**—Doubly disillusioned by this disastrous experience with state Socialism "from above" and political treachery, the militant minority of the French working class turned for emancipation to the co-operative plan. They built up a great co-operative movement, but after years of experiment with it they very generally gave it up as unsuccessful.

**The Commune.**—Then came the great spontaneous working-class revolt of 1871; the establishment of the Commune; the vain attempts of the workers' government to serve as the directing force in the new Socialist society; the quarrels between the various political factions; the fall of the Commune and the horrible massacres, imprisonings, exilings, etc., that "decapitated the French working class."\*

**Working Class Political Action.**—After this lesson of the futility of trying to establish Socialism by a violent seizure of the State, a return was made for a few years to the co-operative plan and the political policy of "reward your friends and punish your enemies." These makeshift programs were soon succeeded by the idea of gradually and "legally" gaining control of the State by working-class political action. The organization of the Socialist Party in 1879 followed as a matter of course.

**Syndicalism.**—After a long, varied and bitter experience with working-class political action, the progressive French militants cast this much-heralded program aside—even as they had the other tried and found wanting plans of "Brotherhood of Man," state Socialism "from above," co-operation, violent seizure of the State, "reward your friends and punish your enemies" political action, etc. And, finally, after veritably running the gamut of social experience; after trying out practically every social panacea ever proposed, and after finding them one and all failures, they at last turned to the labor union as the hope of the working class. Labor unions had existed and been the mainstay of the working class ever since the great revolution, but their worth was long unrecognized by the militant workers who spent their time experimenting with more promising organizations. But as these glittering competitors of the labor unions all demonstrated their worthlessness, the value of the latter finally came to be recognized. The Syndicalist movement resulted. Syndicalism is thus a product of natural selection.

## REPUDIATION OF POLITICAL ACTION.

The last and perhaps most interesting phase in the evolution

\*Marx and Engels in a late preface to the Manifesto of the Communist Party remark of the Commune: "One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.'"

of French working-class fighting tactics to Syndicalism was the repudiation of political action. Many causes contributed to it. One of the first—in addition to the growing knowledge of the ineffectiveness of political action—was the splitting of the Socialist Party, shortly after its foundation, into several warring factions. These factions carried their feuds into the labor unions, to their decided detriment. Many unions were either destroyed outright or degenerated into political study clubs.

A reaction soon took place against this devitalization of the unions, and to the cry of "No politics in the unions" they were placed on a basis of neutrality toward political action. This neutrality soon developed into open hostility, when the designs of the politicians to subjugate the unions became unmistakably evident. The Anarchists—whose movement was stronger in France than in any other country in the world—perceived this anti-political tendency in the unions, and, considering them a fertile field for their propaganda, during the '90s made their celebrated "raid" upon them. This event—which Sorel says is one of the most important in modern history—may be said, to mark the birth of Syndicalist movement proper.\*

The revolt against political action and the development of Syndicalism were given a great stimulus when the Socialists gained a considerable degree of political power in 1900 as a result of the Dreyfus affair. Then the fundamental antagonisms between the Syndicalist and Socialist movements became clear. The Socialist representatives, either in their own interests or that of their party, deliberately betrayed the interests of the working class. The three Socialist ministers—Millerand, with his "social peace" schemes; Viviani, with his "old age pensions for the dead," and Briand, with his soldier scabs—drove thousands of workers out of the Socialist and into the Syndicalist movement and made the rupture between the two movements complete.

## LATER HISTORY.

Since the advent of the Socialists to political power the course of the Syndicalist movement has been phenomenal. Getting control of the C. G. T. and most of its constituent organizations, the Syndicalists have made modern French labor history a long series of spectacular strikes, etc., such as the eight-hour-day movement of 1904-6, the postal strike of 1909, the railroad strike of 1910, etc., which have shaken French capitalism to its foundations. And the successes of the Syndicalist movement have not been confined to France. The movement has been transplanted into practically every capitalist country and is everywhere making great headway. This is especially true of England, where the recent series of great strikes, instigated by the Syndicalists, has startled the world.

The working classes in these countries that have imported Syndicalism have not had the extensive experience of the French working class, so they did not spontaneously generate Syndicalism as the latter did. By importing, ready made, the Syndicalist

\*Syndicalism was not recognized as a distinct movement until the C. G. T. convention at Amiens, in 1906. One delegate thus announced it: "There has been too much said here as though there were only Socialists and Anarchists present. It has been overlooked that there are, above all, Syndicalists here. Syndicalism is a new social theory."



philosophy, tactics, ethics, etc., so laboriously developed in France, they are skipping several rungs in the evolutionary ladder and profiting by the century and a quarter of costly experiences of the French working class.

## VIII

### SYNDICALISM AND THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT.

For various reasons—but principally because of the great opportunities that have existed until recent years for individual workers to better their conditions—American workers as a class are more backward in the defense of their interests than are the workers of any other country. Their labor unions, with their antique fighting tactics and obsolete philosophy, are the laughing stock of revolutionists the world over. They are utterly unfit to combat the modern aggregations of capital. The working class, whose sole defense they are against the capitalist class, is in retreat before the latter's attacks. If this course is to be arrested and the workers started upon the road to emancipation, the American labor movement must be revolutionized. It must be placed upon a Syndicalist basis.

This revolution must be profound, as American labor unions—save that they are aggregations of workers organized to fight their employers—have but little in common with Syndicalist unions. Some of the principal changes necessary in ideals, forms, tactics, etc., will be indicated in the following pages.

**"A Fair Day's Pay For a Fair Day's Work."**—This formula expresses the vague ideal for which the majority of American labor unions are striving. Such unions grant the right to their masters to exploit them, only asking in return that they be given a "fair" standard of living. It is a slave ideal.

The eradication, through education, of the ignorant conservatism from whence this slave ideal springs, is the most important step to be taken in the placing of the American labor movement upon an effective basis. The workers must learn that they are the producers of all wealth, and that they alone are entitled to enjoy it. Inspired by this knowledge, they will refuse to recognize the claim of their masters to even the smallest fraction of this wealth. They will then have a keen sense of their wrongs and a bitter hatred for capitalism, instead of their present indifference. They will then war in earnest upon their masters and will never rest content until, by the abolition of the wage system, they will have forced them to disgorge their ill-gotten booty.

**Harmony of Interests of Capital and Labor.**—Along with the slave ideal of "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work" must go the idiotic doctrine of the harmony of interests of capital and labor, which many labor leaders are so fond of enunciating.

This doctrine is a veritable monument to the ignorance of American workers, and the participation of their union officials in the notorious Civic Federation—which is founded on this doctrine—is a crime and a disgrace to their movement. The workers will have to learn the self-evident fact that in almost every respect the interests of the workers and their employers are diametrically opposite and unharmonizable; that the workers produce just so

much, and that it is to their interest to retain as much of this product as they can, through higher wages, shorter hours, better working conditions, etc., whereas it is to the interest of their employers to rob them of as much of this product as possible, through low wages, long hours, wretched working conditions, etc. They must learn that the great strikes now convulsing the world are battles in the inevitable world-wide warfare between the capitalists and working classes over the division of the product of labor, and that his warfare must go on until the working class has vanquished the capitalist class and abolished the wage system. And, finally, they must learn that any labor leader who preaches the harmony of interest doctrine is either an incompetent ignoramus or a traitor to the working class, and should be treated as such.

**Craft Unionism and the Contract.**—Craft Unionism—or, more properly, Sectional Unionism, as all non-revolutionary labor unions, whether organized on craft or industrial lines, are alike commonly designated "craft" unions—is a prolific source of weakness to the labor movement. By its division of the working class into various sections, each of which, knowing and caring little about the interests of the others, shortsightedly tries to defend the narrow, immediate interests of its own members, Craft Unionism cripples the fighting power of the workers. It sends the working class piecemeal to fight the united capitalists, who, in addition to their own power, artfully use that of the great mass of workers at peace with them to crush the few in revolt.

Their usual method of pitting one section of the working class against another is by the contract. An employer will make contracts, each of which expires at a different date, with the various "craft" unions of his workers. When the first contract expires and the "craft" union directly concerned goes on strike, the balance remain at work and thus help to defeat it. These unwise unions are similarly trounced, one at a time, at the expiration of their contracts. So common has this custom become that Craft Unionism has come to signify but little better than union scabbery. As it robs the workers of their fighting force, Craft Unionism is rightfully looked upon as one of the strongest supports of the capitalist system.

The fundamental error of Craft Unionism is that it takes no cognizance of the class struggle. It attempts to successfully pit small fractions of the working class against not only the great power of the capitalist class, but also against that of the balance of the working class. The remedy for it and the contract evil, which is its inseparable companion, is for the workers to learn that they all have interests in common and that if they will develop their tremendous power and make their interests prevail, they must act together as a unit. Having learned this, they will discard the suicidal "craft" union motto of "Each for himself and the devil take the hindmost," and adopt the revolutionary slogan of "An injury to one is the concern of all." They will replace the inefficient partial strike of Craft Unionism with the potent general strike of Syndicalism and forge forward on the road to economic liberty.

**Autonomy.**—The scabbery of the "craft" unions upon each other is chiefly ascribed by Industrial Unionists to the fact that these unions—both A. F. of L. and independent—are autonomous;



that is, each reserves to itself the right to work or strike as it sees fit, and to otherwise generally transact its own affairs regardless of the others. They claim that if the workers were organized into strongly centralized unions and under the direct control of an all-powerful executive board, this union scabbery would cease. Their theory is that this beneficent executive board—which in some miraculous way is going to be revolutionary, no matter what the condition of the rank and file—would always force all the unions out in support of all strikers, however few they might be.

This absurd remedy flows naturally from the Industrial Unionists' shallow diagnosis of the cause of union scabbery. Even the most cursory examination of labor history will show that while occasionally organized workers, through pure ignorance, will scab on each other, by far the greater part of union scabbery is due not to the autonomy of the unions, but to the lack of it; to the dictatorial powers of the officials of the various national unions. These officials, either through the innate conservatism of officialdom, fear of jeopardizing the rich funds in their care, or downright treachery, ordinarily use their great powers to prevent strikes or to drive their unions' members back to work after they have struck in concert with other workers.

Indeed, it is almost the regular order of procedure for the rank and file of "craft" unions, during big strikes, to surge in revolt in support of the striking workers, and for the union officials to crush this revolt—often with the most unscrupulous means. Every big American strike produces instances of this repression of the rank and file. The present newspaper strike in Chicago furnishes a couple of typical ones. The stereotypers pooled their grievances with the pressmen and struck. For this their local union was immediately expelled from the national union by the general officers on the pretense that it had violated its contract. As a companion feat to this, Jim Lynch, the notorious head of the International Typographical Union, personally prevented the printers from also joining the strike.

The evil of centralized power in labor unions is by no means confined to the American labor movement. It is a world-wide phenomenon. For instance, the great English working-class revolt of the past couple of years has occurred in the face of the most determined opposition of the union leaders, who, instead of being in the van of the movement, as they should be according to the Industrial Unionist theory, are being dragged along, willy nilly, in its wake. The immense German labor unions also give abundant proofs of the evils of centralization. These unions are the nearest approach in form to the Industrial Unionist ideal of any unions in the world. They are all ruled by powerful executive boards—the local unions being destitute of the right to strike at will, raise strike funds, or even to elect their own local officers. The result is that they rarely go on strike, their union dictators simply refusing to allow them to do so. The type of ultra revolutionary executive board, dreamed of by the I. W. W., which will force the workers to strike together, has not developed in practice.

Syndicalists have noted this universal baneful influence of centralized power in labor unions and have learned that if the workers are ever to strike together they must first conquer the right to strike from their labor union officials. Therefore, it is a fundamental principle with them the world over that their unions be decentralized and that the workers alone have the power to decide on the strike.

The C. G. T. of France, which is, for its size, by far the most powerful labor organization in the world, is a typical decentralized Syndicalist union. In it the various national craft and industrial unions\* are strictly independent of each other; they being bound together by only the most general regulations regarding per capita tax, etc. The federated unions in the various localities (bourses du travail) are also autonomous, each deciding for itself all important matters, such as the strike, etc. For instance, the National Federation of Building Trades Workers is divided locally in Paris into thirty-four local craft unions. Each of these local unions individually retains the right to work or strike at will, regardless of the decision of the other thirty-three local unions in the same national union, or of the decision of the national union itself. And yet these thirty-four autonomous local unions can show a better record of solidarity and general strikes than any other building trades organization in the world. The matchless solidarity that characterizes them is due to the understanding of their members that they have interests in common, and not to the compulsion of some beneficent, omnipotent executive board à la I. W. W. Indeed, long experience has taught the French unions that the first consideration for solidarity is the abolition of meddling executive boards.

What is needed in the American labor movement is not less autonomy, but more of it. The executive boards of the various national unions will have to be stripped of their legislative powers and these powers vested in the local unions where they belong. Even though these local unions at present may be hampered by ignorance of their true interests, they are a hundred times rather to be trusted with power than a few national officials who are exposed to all kinds of corrupt and conservative influences. The working class can never emancipate itself by proxy even though its proxies be labor union officials.

**Labor Fakery.**—The American labor movement is infested with hordes of dishonest officials who misuse the power conferred upon them to exploit the labor movement to their own advantage, even though this involves the betrayal of the interests of the workers. The exploits of these labor fakery are too well known to need recapitulation here. Suffice to say the labor faker must go.

The French labor movement presents several excellent methods of exterminating and preventing the labor faker. The chief of these is the decentralized form of the unions. This form, by taking the power out of the hands of executive committees, takes

\*There are both craft and industrial unions in the C. G. T. Syndicalists by no means put as strong emphasis upon the industrial form of labor union as the Industrial Unionists do. They know that industrial unions, when properly organized, viz., in a decentralized form, by bringing the workers into closer touch with each other, eliminating many useless officers, headquarters, etc., are undoubtedly superior to a number of craft unions covering the same categories of workers, and they appreciate them accordingly. But they also know that when industrial unions are improperly organized, viz., in a centralized form, by throwing vast masses of workers under a small dictatorial executive board, they are inferior to a number of craft unions covering the same categories of workers. This is obvious, as the workers in the various craft unions—even though these be centralized—are able to exert a certain amount of influence upon their executive boards; whereas, where each category of workers is but a small unit in a big centralized industrial union their demands for strike, etc., are ignored by the conglomerate executive board. This is well illustrated in Germany where the unions have decidedly lost in vigor by massing themselves into centralized industrial unions.



away the very foundation of labor fakerism, viz., delegated power. Another method is to make official positions financially unattractive to fakers by attaching but small salaries to them (the two secretaries of the C. G. T. receive only \$50.00 per month.) This custom of paying small salaries has also the wholesome effect of making labor union officials feel like working men, instead of like capitalists, as many American labor leaders do. Another faker deterrent is to make official positions so dangerous—owing to the "illegal" tactics of the unions their officials are in constant danger of imprisonment—that fakers have small taste for them. French Syndicalists also object strenuously to individuals making a profession of labor leading, and it is a common occurrence for high union officials to go back to the ranks on the expiration of their terms of office.

The result of these methods is that the French labor movement is remarkably free from labor fakers. As a rule, only the best and most courageous of the workers accept the dangerous and poorly paid official positions. These workers vie with each other in venturesomeness and keep the prisons full. If, however, in spite of these checks, a faker does develop, he is given short shrift. He is disposed of with the most convenient expedient, "legal" or "illegal." American workers couldn't do better than to apply French methods to their faker pest.

**The Unskilled.**—The pernicious and widely prevalent policy of excluding unskilled workers from the labor unions must cease. For their own immediate interests—not to mention class interests—the skilled workers, for two leading reasons, must have the co-operation of the unskilled workers in their industries. In the first place, labor is so specialized and simplified in modern industry that when the ordinary so-called skilled worker goes on strike his place can readily be filled by an unskilled worker who has even the most rudimentary knowledge of the trade. Skilled workers have lost innumerable strikes from this cause. The only way to prevent this scabbery is to take into the union all skilled or unskilled workers directly connected with a given craft or industry. This will make them all realize their common interests and prevent their scabbing upon each other.

And in the second place, the skilled workers in the larger industries are in such a minority that they cannot seriously disorganize these industries—and without this disorganization of industry they cannot win concessions from their employers. To be able to win they must pool their demands with those of the unskilled workers, and, by striking with them, bring whole industries to a standstill. This involves letting the unskilled workers into their unions.

**Job Trusts.**—The job trust unions are a curse to the American labor movement. With their high initiation fees, closed books, apprenticeship restrictions, etc., they are prolific producers of the scab. Like the strictly skilled workers' unions, and for the same reasons, they must go. They must be succeeded by broad unions with low initiation fees and a universal free transfer system. These unions must be inspired by class ideals and organized on the principle of "Once a union man, always a union man."

**Legality.**—The campaign for "law and order" tactics that is continually carried on in the unions by various kinds of legalitarians and weaklings exerts a bad influence upon them. It must cease. The workers must be taught to use all kinds of successful

tactics—whether these have been sanctioned by the ruling class or not. Had the workers awaited legal permission they never would have built up their labor unions, as these organizations and their fighting tactics have always been illegal, and have been developed in the face of most drastic governmental persecution. For the labor unions to become legal would be for them to commit suicide. All laws calculated to hinder their growth and activities have been made only to be broken. A vigorous campaign must be waged in the unions to apprise the workers of this fact.

**Overtime Fast Working and Piece Work.**—These three factors, by increasing the army of the unemployed, are very detrimental to the labor movement. They must all three be abolished. The workers must refuse to work overtime and by the piece. They must also give up their present rapid rate of work, and, by systematically sabotaging their work, turn out as little as possible of it. This slowing down of production will have the same effect as a shortening of the working day. It will provide employment for thousand of workers now unemployed, and will place the whole working class in a much better position to enforce their demands upon their employers.

**Sick and Death Benefits.**—The beneficial institutions with which American labor unions are loaded unquestionably very seriously lessen the fighting abilities of these unions. They prostitute the unions from their true functions as aggressive organizations to the false ones of defensive organizations. They do this by causing great sums of money to be piled up in the hands of national committees, who, of course, have full power to protect these funds. These committees, wishing to prevent their funds from being jeopardized by strikes, ordinarily use this power to prevent strikes and to direct the minds of the workers into insurance channels. Such funds are fruitful sources of harmful centralization. Rebels all over the world are unanimous in their condemnation.

**Strike Benefits.**—Large strike benefits are doubly detrimental to the labor movement. On the one hand, like sick and death benefits, they cause centralization and weaken the action of the unions by placing large funds in the hands of powerful national committees, who keep these funds intact by preventing strikes. And, on the other hand, they cause the workers to depend for success upon their niggardly savings—which are utterly eclipsed by the immense funds of the capitalists—instead of upon their economic power, which is invincible.

The modern strike, dependent upon funds for success, is ordinarily long, legal and a failure. Such strikes are obsolete. The successful type of modern strike is short and depends for its success upon the disorganization of industry it causes. The funds, if any are needed to finance it, are usually raised in the heat of the battle from non-striking workers, who at such times are ready givers.

Small strike funds held by local unions, may be permissible, but large strike funds held by national committees are strictly to be condemned.

**The Unions and Politics.**—A word of caution on this point: The Syndicalists in the United States have ahead of them a long and hard fight with the politicians for the control of the labor movement. They run but one serious danger in this fight, and



that is that their hatred for the politicians may lead them to write anti-political clauses into the preambles and constitutions of the unions under their control.

Labor unions are organizations of workers organized on the basis of their common economic interests. To be successful they require the co-operation of workers of all kinds, regardless of their personal opinions. Consequently they cannot, without disastrous consequences to themselves, make personal convictions—whether in regard to politics, religion or any other matter foreign to the labor unions—a qualification for membership in them. Therefore, Syndicalists must keep the unions under their control officially neutral toward politics. Let their policy be "No politics in the union." As individuals they can safely fight the politicians to their hearts' content.

This is the policy of the French Syndicalists and has proven very successful in the C. G. T. This organization, though controlled by the Syndicalists, is officially neutral toward politics. As a consequence it has in its ranks several unions controlled by Socialists, not to mention the thousands of Socialists in the other unions under the control of Syndicalists. If the C. G. T. took an anti-political stand it would undoubtedly lose this large Socialist element and the French labor movement would suffer the calamity of being split into two warring factions.

In the foregoing pages only the more important evils afflicting American labor unionism have been gone into, and their remedies indicated. Lack of space forbids the discussion of the many minor ones with which it bristles. But the rebel worker, in his task of putting the American labor movement upon a Syndicalist basis, will have no difficulty in recognizing them and their antidotes when he encounters them.

## IX

### Syndicalism and the American Labor Movement (continued).

To revolutionize the American labor movement, Syndicalists must follow the course taken by successful Syndicalists the world over, viz., develop the existing unions and organize unions for those workers for whom at present none exist.\* The natural course of evolution for a labor movement—even as for individual workers—is gradually from the conservative to the revolutionary. Syndicalists are natural educators and leaders of the working class and by actively participating in the labor movement they can greatly hasten this evolution. They can best make their influence felt upon the labor movement through the medium of the organized militant minority.

### THE MILITANT MINORITY.

In every group of human beings, be it Y. W. C. A., A. F. of L., M. & M., Salvation Army or what not, there are to be found a certain few individuals who exercise a great influence over the thoughts and actions of the rest of the mass of individuals composing the group. They are the directing forces of these groups—the sluggish mass simply following their lead. They are natural leaders and maintain their leadership through their superior intel-

\*The I. W. W. plan of building an entirely new and revolutionary labor movement, on the theory that the old conservative unions are incapable of evolution and must go out of existence, is a freak. It was arbitrarily invented by the Socialist politicians who founded the I. W. W. A few years previous, these politicians, in launching their political movement, had condemned all existing political parties as non-working class by nature and founded the Socialist Party, to which they gave a monopoly of representing the political interests of the working class. When they felt the need for an economic "wing" to their movement, as the Socialist Party was progressing favorably, they followed exactly the same course as they had pursued at the latter's founding; they condemned all existing unions and founded the I. W. W., to which they generously gave a monopoly on representing the economic interests of the working class. They made absolutely no investigation of the problems presented by a universal dual labor organization—as the wild utes of the first I. W. W. convention show. They jumped at the conclusion that if a new political party could succeed, so could a universal labor organization.

The dual organization theory of the I. W. W. has no justification in this country—where the I. W. W. is a distinct failure and the old are showing marked capacities for evolution—nor in any other disputed in the world. In every European country, where similar attempts have been made to ignore the old conservative unions and build revolutionary movements—as in Germany, England (I. W. W.), and these attempts have been failures and the Syndicalist movements of the weak, while in every European country where efforts have been made to revolutionize the old unions—as in France, England (only the leagues), Spain, Italy, Portugal—they have been successful. Syndicalist movements are strong.

The comparative effectiveness of the two methods is strikingly illustrated in the English labor movement. The W. F. of M., years the I. W. W. had unsuccessfully tried to found a revolutionary movement independent of the old trade unions, a couple of years ago, a few Syndicalists, headed by propagating revolutionary ideas in the old unions, adopted this course of great strikes and the rapid growth of Syndicalism at strike would never eloquent testimonials to the effectiveness of the



lect, energy, courage, cunning, organizing ability, oratorical power, etc., as the case may be. They are militant minorities.

The labor movement, owing to its peculiar nature, is especially fertile in and responsive to the efforts of militant minorities of various sorts, such as Syndicalists, Anarchists, Socialists, Craft Unionists, Clericals, etc., who are each striving to control it for their own ends. All over the world it will be found following the lead of one or more of these militant minorities. The most potent of all the militant minorities in the labor movement are the Syndicalists, whose vigorous philosophy, ethics and tactics—which are those par excellence of the labor movement—coupled with their unflagging energy and courage, born of the revolution, make them invincible in the struggle between the various militant minorities for the control of the labor movement. Scattered through conservative unions, they simply compel the great mass of workers into action and to become revolutionary, in spite of the contrary efforts of other militant minorities. It was for the Syndicalist militants that the term "militant minority" was coined, and it is ordinarily applied solely to them—a somewhat incorrect usage, which, however, will henceforth be complied with in this pamphlet.

**Organization and Power of the Militant Minority.**—French Syndicalists have noted the great power of the militant minority, and by thoroughly organizing and exploiting it have made their labor movement the most revolutionary and powerful in the world. The Syndicalists in England, Spain, Italy, etc., patterning after the French, have achieved their success by using similar tactics.

The usual French method of organizing the militant minority in a given union is for the Syndicalists in this union to establish a paper devoted to their interests. Through the columns of this paper, which is the nucleus of their organization, they at once propagate revolutionary ideas, standardize their policies, instigate strike movements, and organize their attacks on the conservative forces in the unions. A fighting machine is thus built up which enables the Syndicalists to act as a unit at all times and to thoroughly exploit their combined power.

The power of the militant minority when so organized is immense. Let us cite the recent French railroad strike as an illustration of it. Until a couple of years ago the French railroad unions, dominated by Socialists, were so conservative that it was common saying that they would never strike again. But a few months after the militant minority deposed the Socialist railroad dictator, Guerard, France was shaken by the recent great strike of 50,000 railroad workers. This strike, which, though by the Socialists (as related in an earlier chapter), was the most remarkable demonstrations of working-class solidarity that have ever occurred, was directly due to the efforts of the militant minority. The persecution which the strike enables us to estimate approximately the strength of this minority. In all 3,300 workers were employed throughout the railroad service—non-striking—on the pretense that they were responsible for this number it is doubtful if more than 1,000 Syndicalists, as the persecution was so rigorous that they were discharged for simply saying the strike was something similar, and other hundreds were dismissed by bosses who had stored up petty grievances and seized this favorable opportunity to get rid of

And it is to the activities of these approximately 1,000 militants that this epoch-making strike must be credited. They were the real moving force behind the strike. By their vigor, courage, arguments, etc., they drew the mass of workers after them in spite of their own indifference, governmental opposition, Socialist hostility, etc. They were the life of the strike—the leaven that leaveneth the whole. The rest of the workers were but little better than pawns or putty—to be manipulated as the militants chose.

Similar instances of the power of the militant minority might be cited from the history of almost every union in France, in all of which the militant minority is more or less organized. The handfuls of organized rebels in these unions, with the co-operation of their national organization, which, like that in the individual unions, is formed through rebel papers, are rapidly winning the labor movement from Socialist control, and are infusing it with revolutionary spirit and making a vigorous fighting machine of it.

**The Militant Minority in the United States.**—The militant minority, which is such a potent factor in the French labor movement, is utterly disorganized in the American labor movement. Even its existence as a factor in the labor movement—to say nothing of its potentialities—is unsuspected by all save a comparatively few observers. This state of affairs is directly due to the I. W. W.

Ever since its foundation, seven years ago, the I. W. W. has carried on a vigorous propaganda of the doctrine that the old conservative unions are incapable of evolution and must be supplanted by a "ready-made" revolutionary movement. Beginning as it did, at a time when American revolutionists were almost entirely unacquainted with the principles and powers of the militant minority, this doctrine has produced a profound effect upon them. In fact, practically all of them—Anarchists, Socialists and Industrial Unionists alike—have accepted it unquestioningly as true. They have become obsessed with the notion that nothing can be accomplished in the old unions, and that the sooner they go out of existence the better it will be for the labor movement. As a natural consequence they, with rare exceptions, have either quit the old unions and become directly hostile to them, or they have become so much dead material in them, making no efforts to improve them. The result is a calamity to the labor movement. It has been literally stripped of its soul. The militants who could inspire it with revolutionary vigor have been taken from it by this ridiculous theory. They have left the old unions, where they could have wielded a tremendous influence, and gone into sterile isolation. They have left the labor movement in the undisputed control of conservatives and fakers of all kinds to exploit as they see fit.\*

Practically all the unions showed marked evil effects of the desertion and disarming of their militants. Of the innumerable instances of such that might be cited let us mention only the typical case of the Western Federation of Miners.

According to a statement made recently by Vincent St. John—at present secretary-treasurer of the I. W. W.—the W. F. of M., when it was in its best fighting days, several years ago, was domi-

\*Had the militant majority of French railroads adopted this course of tactics, there is little doubt but that their great strike would never have occurred.



nated and controlled by a fighting minority of about ten per cent of its membership. This militant minority was so well organized and effective, however, that it compelled the whole W. F. of M. to be a fighting organization. It was a living proof of the power of the militant minority.

But today the W. F. of M. is a conservative organization. It has lost its former vigor and is rapidly developing into a typical Socialist labor union-voting machine. This decline is due to the disorganization of the W. F. of M.'s once powerful militant minority, which occurred when the W. F. of M., because of a factional quarrel, withdrew from the I. W. W. On this event the bulk of the W. F. of M. militants, being obsessed with the patriotic I. W. W. doctrine that none other than an I. W. W. union can be revolutionary, either quit the W. F. of M. or became inactive in it. The Haywoods, St. Johns, Heslewoods, and the other strong militants, who had made the W. F. of M. the fighting organization that it once was, quit fighting to control their union. They became merely onlookers so far as it was concerned. The result is that the Socialists are left in almost undisputed control of it, to the sad detriment of its fighting spirit.

Many similar instances of the disorganization of the militant minority in the various unions might be cited did space permit. But American direct-actionists are finally arousing themselves from the inaction that has crippled them so long. They are beginning to realize that the dream of the I. W. W. is impossible and that the American labor movement, in becoming revolutionary, will follow the natural evolutionary course taken by the labor movements of all countries. They are beginning to realize that while they have been separated from the labor movement, mumbling phrases about the impossibility of doing anything in the old unions, the Socialists—who are rapidly freeing themselves from the I. W. W. idea—have been driving the old line craft union fakers before them and taking charge of the labor movement. They are getting an inkling of the powers and possibilities of the militant minority and are proceeding to organize it. This organization is the Syndicalist League of North America.

#### THE SYNDICALIST LEAGUE OF NORTH AMERICA.

The Syndicalist League of North America is an organization of Syndicalists, formed for the purpose of effectively propagating Syndicalist tactics, principles, etc., among all groups of organized and unorganized workers. **IT IS NOT A LABOR UNION, AND IT DOES NOT ALLOW ITS BRANCHES TO AFFILIATE WITH LABOR UNIONS.** It is simply an educational league with the task of educating the labor movement to Syndicalism.

The S. L. of N. A. plan of organization, somewhat similar to that of the Industrial Syndicalist League, which is playing such a prominent part in the present revolution in the English labor movement, is a variation from the French plan. In addition to founding Syndicalist papers in the various industries, it organizes the rebels into dues-paying leagues. These Syndicalist leagues, which enable the militants in many ways to the better exploit their power, are of two kinds, viz., local and national. A local Syndicalist league consists of all the Syndicalists in a given locality,

and a national Syndicalist league consists of all the Syndicalists in a given craft or industry.

The S. L. of N. A. is a possibilist organization with a practical program. It considers the utopian policy of a universal dual organization a most pernicious one because it at once introduces disastrous jurisdictional wars in the labor movement and destroys the efficiency of the militant minority. Its first principle is unity in the labor movement. It is based on the demonstrated fact that the labor movement will become revolutionary in the measure that the individuals composing it become educated. It is, therefore, seeking to bring about this education by the exploitation of the militant minority. Consequently, it seizes every opportunity to introduce betterments, great or small, into the labor movement. Though in existence but a few months, it has already achieved remarkable success. It is responsible for the removal of a number of abuses from, and the introduction of a number of improvements into several international unions. It is also a potent factor in the various localities where it has branch leagues established.

The S. L. of N. A. is demonstrating that the American labor movement is ripe for a revolution and that the conservative forces opposed to this revolution are seemingly strong only because they have had no opposition. It is making them crumble before the attacks of the militant minority, organized and conscious of its strength.

All workingmen interested in this movement to place the American labor movement upon a Syndicalist basis can secure full information regarding the S. L. of N. A. by communicating with



W. Z. FOSTER,  
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CHICAGO.

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